

SECURITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE:
A CROATIAN PERSPECTIVE

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General Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

SECURITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE: A CROATIAN PERSPECTIVE, by MAJ Mario Lukacic, 100 pages.

This thesis addresses the complexity of the Croatian operational environment. There are two levels of analysis that must be examined to understand the complexity of the Croatian operational environment. The first level consists of relations among countries in the region that differ in their interpretation of the past, but more important they differ on their expectation for the future. These different points of view on problems and solutions have their roots in wars of the 1990's in former Yugoslavia, and also in deeper history. Additionally, most of countries that were founded after the dissolving of Yugoslavia are not yet members of European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although all of them have expressed the desire to become members of western alliances, only Slovenia and Croatia have reached that goal. Encircled by EU or NATO members and laden with abstruse (historical) issues, countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia represent a potential security vacuum in South East Europe. The second level of analysis focuses on the rivalry between Russia and the West. The West in this case represents countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or European Union (EU). In its attempt to regain world power status, Russia looks on NATO/EU as a threat and seeks to project its own interests in South East Europe. This combination of adversarial interests among countries in the region and the determination to stay on the present course, threatens the stability and security in South-East Europe that was recently established. An environment with a diversity of problems and a huge lack of trust is a fruitful base for creation of instability. Although all of the region's countries consider NATO and EU as an area of stability and prosperity, some of them are more or less susceptible to the Russian influence, mainly because they could expect the Russian support in the resolution of regional' problems. This poses the question how can Croatia, as a NATO and EU member help mitigate Russian influence in the region, and decrease the level of regional instability?

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ACRONYMS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
DGDP	Directorate of Graduate Degree Programs
EU	European Union
GDP	Graduate Degree Programs
LNG	Liquid Natural Gas
LOE	Line of effort
MMAS	Master of Military Arts and Science
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSS	National Security Strategy
RS	Bosnian Serb Republic (Republika Srpska)
SGA	Small Group Advisor
TAP	Trans Adriatic Pipeline
UN	United Nations
YPA	Yugoslav People's Army

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.

— Winston Churchill

Overview

When Russia announced its new National Security Strategy (NSS) at the end of 2015, the well-known statement by Winston Churchill, although a little bit geographically modified, became actual again. In the strategy, Russia defined NATO enlargement as the main threat to its national security.¹ Although things today are rather different from the time of the Cold War (Russia is Europe's main supplier with natural gas² and a big market for European industrial products), reasons for concerns about European security remain. As we saw in recent examples in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2014, Russia is willing to use armed force in order to prevent the expansion of NATO in former Soviet republics in what Russia considers its zone of influence. Map 1. represents the present division of Europe into two main zones of influence. The western zone of influence encompasses NATO and EU members while the Russian zone includes Belorussia. The rest of Europe represents a place of confrontation for greater influence

¹ Maksim Blinov, "Russian National Security Strategy for 2016: Key Updated Points," *Sputnik International*, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160102/1032599111/russia-national-security-strategy.html>.

² Ivica Đorđević and Marko Filijović, "Balkan Energy Corridors as a Source and Potential for Solving Security Problems," *Megatrend Review* 8 (2011), accessed April 13, 2016, <http://megatrendreview.nezbit.edu.rs/files/pdf/EN/Megatrend%20Review%20vol%2008-1-2011.pdf>.

between the West and Russia. That includes South-East Europe region, Ukraine, and Caspian region. The region of South East Europe has been such a place for centuries.

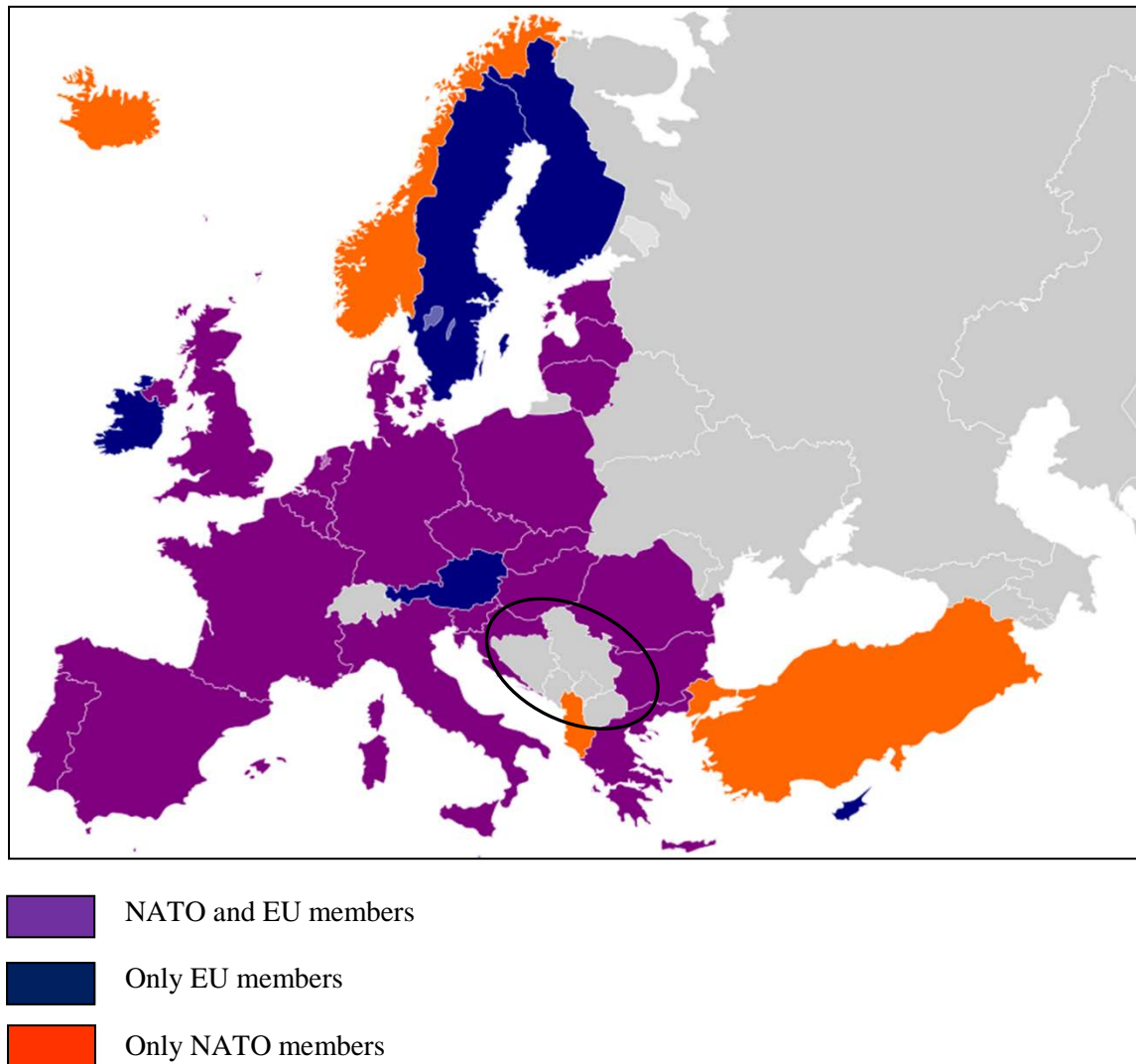


Figure 1. Security environment in Europe

Source: Created by author from Concept Draw, “European Membership of the EU and NATO Map,” accessed 15 October 2015, <https://conceptdraw.com/a1130c3/preview/640>.

South-East Europe has a long history of confrontation and conflicts. It may be the most unstable region of the European continent in the 20th century. In addition to both

world wars, the region has faced several armed conflicts that still have significant impact on today's national policies. The most recent period of instability consisted of six wars and armed conflict between 1991 and 2002 in the territory of former Yugoslavia. With heavy losses in lives, infrastructure and economy, these conflicts left a deep division among participating nations that remain today. Unsolved problems that have their roots in past wars represent a major obstacle for normalization of relations among the region's countries. An environment with a diversity of problems and a huge lack of trust is a fruitful base for the creation of instability.

All of the region's countries consider NATO and EU as organizations that represent stability and prosperity. Still, some countries in South-East Europe are more susceptible to Russian influence in addressing regional problems. The question is how Croatia, as a NATO and EU member can help mitigate Russian influence in the region, and decrease the level of regional instability.

History overview

Since the present can be defined as a continuation of the past, understanding of the region's past is crucial to understand its present. Then it is easier to decide which path we want to choose for the future. The thesis provides a short historical overview on the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia and the development of Russian influence in the region.

Dissolution of Yugoslavia

In 1990 Yugoslavia was in a deep economic and social crisis.³ Yugoslavia consisted of six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia) and two autonomous regions (Kosovo and Vojvodina) that were considered part of Serbia. Each of the republics, except BiH, has a majority nation (nation that ethnically represents the majority of the population). Each of the nations has a different view on national problems and their solutions. Slovenia and Croatia interceded for independence from Yugoslavia and declared independence in 1991. Serbia and Montenegro agreed but stated that boundaries should be determined on ethnic principles. Huge tensions and deep mistrust resulted with armed conflicts occurring in 1991.⁴

After declaration of Slovenian independence in July 1991, Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) intervened in order to seize international border crossings in Slovenia and force the Slovenian government to withdraw the declaration of independence. After ten days of sporadic fighting YPA was forced to withdraw from the Slovenian territory and Slovenia secured independence. During the war in Slovenia, the majority of Slovenians, Croats, Bosnians, and Macedonians left the YPA which remained under Serbian control.⁵

Fighting in Croatia begun a few weeks before the War in Slovenia. Croatia had a significant part of a Serbian population that did not support Croatian independence. The war in Croatia started when Serbs from Croatia, supported by YPA, announced their

³ Dennis P. Hupchick and Harold E. Cox, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the Balkans* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Map 48: Collapse of Communism, 1989-1991.

⁴ Ibid., Map 49: Wars of Yugoslav Succession, 1991-1995.

⁵ Ibid.

secession from Croatia. After four years of fighting, Croatian forces regained control over all internationally recognized Croatian territory. The majority of Serb population left Croatia for Serbia. Croatia and Serbia continue to have open issues about the recognized borders and missing persons.⁶

Macedonia declared independence in late 1991 without any armed conflicts. However, Greece still does not accept the use of the Macedonian name and insists on some geographical addition in order to distinguish it from the name for the Greek region Macedonia. Greece blocks any possible recognition of Macedonia in NATO or EU under its present name.

Following Slovenia and Croatia, BiH declared independence in 1992. BiH is the only Yugoslav republic without a single ethnic majority in their population. Bosnians, Serbs and Croats represent the majority of the population. YPA units in BiH switched to the Serbian military forces. After three years of intensive fighting among all three ethnic groups, accompanied with war crimes, Croatian and Bosnian offensive forced the Serbian forces to negotiate for peace. BiH remained an independent country with two entities.

Kosovo was the autonomous region inside Serbia, but mostly populated with Albanians. Armed conflicts between Albanians and Serbian forces escalated in 1998. After significant civilian casualties, NATO decided to conduct an air campaign against Serbian forces. In 1999 NATO forced the Serbian government to a peace settlement.⁷ Kosovo came under UN control and in 2008 declared independence. Serbia does not recognize Kosovo as an independent country and still considers it a part of Serbia.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., back cover page.

From 1999 to 2001 the Albanian minority in Serbia, along the border with Kosovo, conducted several armed attacks on Serbian forces. The Albanian insurgency was defeated by Serbia in 2001. Insurgency of the Albanian minority in Macedonia started in 2001. Until the end of the year, conflict ended with an agreement that gave Albanians more rights and autonomy. Montenegro declared independence in 2006 after a majority of the population of Montenegro voted for independence on a referendum.

After fifteen years, the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia was finished, creating seven new countries. The process was characterized by violence and armed conflicts. The new countries participated in some kind of armed conflict and suffered losses in lives and property. It left enduring problems that affect present national policies and prevent normalization of relations.

Russian influence

Historically, from the beginning of 19th century and the Napoleonic wars, Russia has expressed an interest in South East Europe. That was a time of great expansion for the Russian empire in all directions and constant conflict with the Ottoman Empire. The main obstacle for the Russian expansion into South-East Europe was the Ottoman Empire. This Empire controlled the majority of South-East Europe and prevented Russian access to the Black Sea and further to the Mediterranean. Access to the Mediterranean was needed to improve Russian economic trade with Western Europe and enable additional influence on European affairs through a Russian Naval presence. The key terrain of Bosphorus and Dardanelle straits under Turkish control connected the Black Sea with Mediterranean and were critical to their economic, military and political strategy. In order to degrade the Ottoman Empire, Russia supported national movements of Slavic

nations in the region seeking independence from the Ottoman government. Later, with restoration of independent countries in the region, Russia established alliances with several countries in the region, particularly with Serbia and Montenegro. These alliances were critical in 1914 in drawing Europe into World War I. In spite of its withdrawal from Europe, Turkey maintained control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelle straights. During World War I, this region was a place over which both sides competed for control. Central Powers wished to connect Austro-Hungarian forces with Bulgarian forces and further with Turkish forces. Allied intent was to connect Russian forces with Romanian, and Serbian forces with English and French forces in Greece. World War I was the first time that nations in the focus of this research fought one another. BiH, Croatia and Slovenia as parts of Austro-Hungarian Empire fought on the Central Power's side while Montenegro and Serbia (Macedonia and Kosovo were then parts of the Serbian Kingdom) fought on the side of the Allies.

Motivation and Qualifications

As a young man I witnessed significant historical events in the region. This experience motivated me to choose a military career as an officer. The majority of my career has been spent as a staff officer in the Military Intelligence Battalion. In 2013 I was assigned to the Croatian Army Command G-4 Department. In 2015 I was selected for United States Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC). Some of the courses I took at CGSC, especially C 200 The Strategic Context of Operational Art, C 300 Unified Action, and C 500 Operational Art and Joint Planning, helped me to better articulate and connect theoretical principles of the Operational Art with real events and relations among the countries in South East Europe. For a long time, I have wanted to put

on paper the rational and objective explanation of the relationships among the countries in the region; but, my obligations and lack of time did not allow me to do it. This MMAS thesis allows me the opportunity to conduct a social science study on this topic of great importance to me. I will use my knowledge about geography, history and military experience as well as to collect and analyze accessible data points in order to conduct a thorough and objective analysis of my thesis.

Topic and the Research Problem

Research will address the complexity of the Croatian operational environment. There are two levels of analysis that must be examined to understand the complexity of the Croatian operational environment. The first level consists of relations among countries in the region that differ in their interpretation of the past, but more important they differ on their expectation for the future. These different points of view on problems and solutions have their roots in wars of the 1990s in former Yugoslavia, and also in deeper history. Additionally, most of countries that were founded after the dissolving of Yugoslavia are not yet members of European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although all of them have expressed the desire to become members of western alliances, only Slovenia and Croatia have reached that goal. Encircled by EU or NATO members and laden with abstruse (historical) issues, like BiH, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia represent a potential security vacuum in South East Europe. The second level of analysis focuses on the rivalry between Russia and the West. The West in this case represents countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or European Union (EU). In its attempt to regain world power status, Russia looks on NATO/EU as a threat and seeks to project its own

interests in South East Europe. This combination of adversarial interests among countries in the region and the determination to stay on the present course, threatens the stability and security in South-East Europe that was recently established.

Purpose and Significance

It is not unusual that small nations fight a big nation's wars. In order to avoid a total war between superpowers, they often defend their interest in limited conflicts conducted by small nations with superpowers support. The purpose of this thesis is to enlighten relations between regional problems among countries in the region and the global contest between the West and Russia. The result of this analysis may be a recommendation for the use of Croatian national instruments of power in addressing the complex security environment. This thesis has significance in the area of national security studies, especially for Croatia and the countries in the region. It will provide a building block to pure academic contributions that covers the topic.

General Definitions

Influence

The thesis will focus on influential relations among states. In that sense, influence is determined as a non-coercive form of power. It is the capability of a state to cause changes in other state policy.⁸

⁸ Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998), 249.

National interest

National interest is defined as “the basic determinants that guide state policy in relation to the external environment. It applies only to sovereign states and relates specifically to foreign policy.”⁹ Security and country integrity are often determined as a basic national interest.

Security

The *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* defines security as “A term which denotes the absence of threats to scare values.”¹⁰ Although absolute security is impossible to reach, it remains the state’s ultimate goal. Security has several dimensions, like economic security or environmental security. The thesis will focus on the military dimension of security where a war or a conflict situation represents a threat.¹¹

Security vacuum

It refers to the fact that countries in the region have not determined its future relations with the West and Russia. Therefore, they represent an area of contest between the West and Russia. As a consequence, the region could face further tensions and confrontation that can cause potential instability.

South-East Europe

It is a political and geographical region of Europe that replaces the more traditional term “Balkans”. Regional boundaries can vary greatly due to the political,

⁹ Ibid., 346.

¹⁰ Ibid., 490.

¹¹ Ibid.

economic, historical, cultural, and geographic considerations of the observer. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was an institution aimed at strengthening peace, democracy, human rights and economy in the countries of South Eastern Europe from 1999 to 2008. It defined South-East Europe as the following countries: Albania, BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. For this research purpose only, the author will focus on countries established after the dissolving of Yugoslavia that are not members of the NATO or EU (BiH, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) and their relation with Croatia.

The West

The West represents countries that are members of NATO or EU. The term “The West” in the global environment refers to the nations of Europe and its former colonies in North America and Australia. For this research purpose, it is limited only to the NATO and EU nations. Although all of them have their own, particular national interests and policies, they strive to reconcile their policies and actions through institutions of NATO or EU.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Primary research question is: “How should Croatia use its instruments of national power (Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic–DIME) to mitigate Russian influence in the Region?” I will describe (recommend) how Croatia should align its policy with NATO and EU and leverage its NATO and EU membership in order to suppress the Russian influence in the region and derive the region from Russian zone of influence. Secondary research questions in support of the primary one are: “Why are,

countries in the region, susceptible to the Russian influence?” and “How does Russia project its influence in the region?” In my research I will investigate correlations between regional problems and Russia’s influence in the region. Also, the thesis will encompass ways that Russia uses its instruments of national power in order to impose its influence in the region. The hypothesis is that Russia exploits regional problems to support one of the sides for exchange of tight relations with Russia.

Assumptions and Limitations

General assumption for this research will be the following:

1. Croatia as NATO and EU member should mitigate Russian influence in the region in order to facilitate convergence of the region towards NATO and EU.
2. Russia will continue its pattern of aggressive protection of what it considers its national interest.

Limitations should further focus the path of research. They are geographical, historical, and limitations of research resources.

1. Geographically, research will encompass only Croatia and neighboring countries from the region, particularly Serbia, BiH and Montenegro.
2. Although the regional issues have deep roots in the history, a research will focus on the present conditions.
3. This research will be conducted at the unclassified level, using available open source materials. Since the topic is very actual, new data emerges on a daily basis and the thesis should be regularly updated during the research. Also, available literature is focused more on the past while the current state is fragmentally described in a series of

articles. Being a Croatian citizen, I will have to be aware of my cognitive biases in drawing my conclusion.

Scope and Delimitations

For centuries the region of South-East Europe was a place of confrontation among different regional and continental interests. The current conditions are the same. The only facts that have changed are names of powers in the regional contest. The thesis will encompass Russian influence as one of the security environment aspects in South-East Europe. The thesis will examine in detail ends, ways, and means of Russian strategy toward the region and the potential Croatian action in broader Western counteraction strategy against Russian influence.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview on literature used to write the thesis. During my research, I have found a broad spectrum of references that are related to the thesis, but describe only specific parts and give only a partial answer to the research questions. Nevertheless, this research combined with analytical thought provides a logical basis for addressing all proposed research questions.

According to the domain they encompass, I will align the references into three main categories. The first group refers to the recent and past history. To fully understand the present environment of the South-East Europe and relations among countries in the region, any research has to start with historical sequence of events. It also provides a historical background and the extent of Russian influence in the region. The second group of references describe the ways and means of Russian strategy in the region. According to this facts, Russia projects its interests in South-East Europe through several areas: economic cooperation, military cooperation, and providing political support in international relations. The third group of references describes Croatian instruments of power and their potential to mitigate the Russian influence in the region.

References are a combination of written and electronic material. The main resource of literature and research materials is Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) and its electronic database. My intention is to use a current or updated literature in order to justify my conclusion with the most recently published references.

Accordingly, I will use journal articles and newspaper for up-to-date information. Since the topic is very actual and events rotate on almost daily basis, I have to update the thesis

regularly. That refers especially to the many programs of cooperation between Russia and the countries of South-East Europe. Books are more suitable for history research needed for this thesis and to the case study methodology. They describe historical events with a distance and perspective is more scientific. Emotions are controlled. For the purpose of this thesis I will use literature from all sides in order to provide an objective description of events and their correlation. Another significant source of reference will be government publication and documentation. Especially as these references address the respective country regional national security strategies. Finally, I will use materials from my CGSC class curriculum in order to articulate the thesis according to U.S. doctrinal terms and principles.

History focused sources

The book *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* by Susan Woodward is a comprehensive piece about tragic events in former Yugoslavia that took place in the early 1990s with a focus on conflict in BiH as the most complex one. It describes the transformation of Yugoslavia at the end of Cold War from the best prepared Eastern-European country “to make a successful transition to a market economy and westernization”¹² to its dissolution in armed conflicts in early 1990s. The book starts with very detailed political and economic situation in Yugoslavia in late 1980s, and continues with armed conflicts that occurred in Slovenia, Croatia and BiH during 1991, and

¹² Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, DC: The Brooking Institution, 1995), back cover page.

continued in 1994. She provides an analysis of events and processes; she explains what the international community can learn from its response to the Yugoslav crises.¹³

She argues that focusing on ancient ethnic hatreds and military aggression was a way to avoid the problem and misunderstood nationalism in post-communist states. According to her, the real origin of the Yugoslav conflict is disintegration of governmental authority and the breakdown of political and civil order. The Yugoslav conflict is inseparable from international change and interdependence, and it is not confined to the Balkans but is part of a more widespread phenomenon of political disintegration.¹⁴

Woodward bases analysis on her visit to Yugoslavia before the democratic elections in 1990 and her experience as a senior adviser to Yasushi Akashi, the top UN official in the former Yugoslavia and special representative of UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali during the later stage of the Bosnian war.¹⁵ For this thesis' purpose, it is a valuable source of information about the approach of great powers¹⁶ to the problem of Yugoslavia: from the indifference at the beginning crises¹⁷ to the different points of view and conflict at its climax.¹⁸

As its name says, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans* is a other valuable book that leads readers through the history of the region. It consists of 50 maps with brief but clear explanations of historical events divided into 7 historical periods embracing history from the Roman era to the Kosovo Crisis in 1999. The book is “an

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Generally, the term great powers is related to the United States, EU, and Russia.

¹⁷ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 98.

¹⁸ Ibid., 297.

admirable summary of the history of the area, tracing the complex ethnic and cultural interaction of the peoples”¹⁹ in the region. “It is also an excellent background for the understanding of the current problems experienced in the region.”²⁰ For this thesis’ purpose the book is very valuable because it explains the strategic importance of the region between three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa)²¹ and three civilizations (the Orthodox Eastern European, the Western European, and the Islamic).²²

Historically, the cultural fault line dividing the Western and Eastern European civilizations in the Balkans runs from Transylvania in Romania, through Serbia’s (Yugoslavia’s) Vojvodina province, the Slavonian border region separating Croatia and Serbia, all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the Dalmatian-Montenegrin border and northern Albania along the Adriatic Sea. A second fault line separates the Eastern European and the Islamic civilizations. Although seemingly short—it parallels the border of Turkey with Bulgaria and Greece . . . cutting northwestward . . . through Bulgaria, northern Greece, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo, eventually intersecting the East-West European fault in Bosnia-Herzegovina and northern Albania.²³

It is important to notice that all three civilizations “converge in Bosnia-Herzegovina,”²⁴ the center of the area that this thesis is focused on. Further, the book is valuable source of information about Russia’s intent to support national movements on the Balkans during 19th century in order to gain its final goal—the Turkish straits.²⁵ Also,

¹⁹ Hupchick and Cox, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the Balkans*, back cover page.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., Map 1: Physical.

²² Ibid., Map 5: Cultural.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., Map 26: The Balkan Crisis of 1875-1876.

the book provides overall general information about “dramatic, tumultuous, and . . . tragic”²⁶ events that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It describes wars of Yugoslav Succession, 1991-1995²⁷ and The Kosovo Crisis, 1999 which ended with NATO air campaign.²⁸

Keeping Tito afloat: the United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War by Lorraine M. Lees is the title of a book, but also the popular name for the US policy toward Yugoslavia during the Cold War. Lees describes the relationship between Yugoslavia and the US in the time of Truman’s and Eisenhower’s administration. In the beginning Tito’s Yugoslavia was considered the main Soviet’s ally in Europe and dispute between the two communist leaders came as a surprise for the US. With a small delay, the US soon saw a possibility to break a communist bloc in Central and Eastern Europe hoping that other countries will follow the Yugoslavian example. The US started to send a different kind of aid to Yugoslavia, including military equipment. At one point in time, the possibility of Yugoslavia joining NATO was seriously considered. In the end, other communist countries in Europe did not follow Yugoslavia and break the connections with Soviet Union, and Tito refused to democratize his regime. Still, it was a success for US foreign policy because Yugoslavia showed that it is possible to develop a different form of communism without strong Soviet influence.

²⁶ Ibid., back cover page.

²⁷ Ibid., Map 49: Wars of Yugoslav Succession, 1991-1995.

²⁸ Ibid., Map 50: The Kosovo Crisis, 1999.

If Tito's value as a wedge demanded that he remain part of the communist world, if his usefulness, in Dulles's²⁹ words, was mostly as an "exhibit," so be it.³⁰

Croatia: A Nation Forged in War is a book about creation a Croatian nation and historical events that shaped it. The author, Marcus Tanner describes "the rise, fall, and rebirth of Croatia from its medieval origins to today's tentative peace."³¹ For this thesis purpose Tanner gives, in the beginning of the book, the Croatian strategic position between different geographical areas and confronted cultures.

Croatia's unique position on the crossroads of Europe—between Eastern and Western Christendom, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans, and between the old Habsburg and Ottoman empires—has been both a curse and a blessing, inviting the attention of larger and more powerful neighbors.³²

Tanner was the Balkan correspondent of the London *Independent* from 1988 to 1994. That gives him a firsthand experience of the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s. In his book, Tanner describes a role of the international community, especially US policy, towards included parties in the war.

US policy towards Yugoslavia had done a 180-degree turn from the days when Baker had toured the Yugoslav capitals in the spring of 1991, lecturing the Croats and Slovenes on the perils of independence. In April 1992 Washington had recognized Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia simultaneously, and since then the new Clinton administration had lobbied consistently for a hard line against Milosevic,

²⁹ John Foster Dulles was US Secretary of State during Eisenhower administration from 1953 to 1959.

³⁰ Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito afloat* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 236.

³¹ Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), first cover page.

³² Ibid.

a stance that irritated the French and the British, as the US had refused to commit troops to the UN force in Bosnia or Croatia.³³

To End a War by Richard Holbrooke is a comprehensive piece about events that precede to the Dayton Peace Agreement; the agreement that stopped the war in Croatia and BiH, and its consequences to the region and broader US policy in Europe. Since Holbrooke was the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs from 1994 to 1996, and an architect of Dayton Peace Accords,³⁴ he provides an internal look on “high-wire, high-stakes diplomacy in one of the toughest negotiations of modern times.”³⁵ The book is a valuable source on Western policy towards the region during the war.

For the first time since World War II, Washington had turned a major security issue entirely over to the Europeans . . . In fact, Yugoslavia was the worst possible place for a “first test” of a new American policy to “make the Europeans step up to the plate.” To be sure, with the Soviet threat gone and Germany united, Europe had to assume a larger role in the Atlantic partnership, as they themselves wanted.³⁶

Resembling Tanner’s book, Holbrooke also asserted that the US lead in resolving the conflict was necessary and successful after numerous European failures. The book is a valuable source of information about the US policy, as a NATO core member³⁷ towards the region in the broader post-Cold-War era context.

³³ Ibid., 292.

³⁴ Richard Holbrook, *To End a War* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), 411.

³⁵ Ibid., back cover page.

³⁶ Ibid., 28-29.

³⁷ Ibid., 28.

Dayton shook the leadership elite of post-Cold War Europe. The Europeans were grateful to the United States for leading the effort that finally ended the war in Bosnia, but some European officials were embarrassed that American involvement had been necessary.³⁸

The US succeeded not only to bring a peace in the region, but also found a compromise with Russia in its “role in the security architecture of post-Cold War Europe; and second, to attend a historic NATO summit on July 9 in Madrid that invited Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to join NATO.”³⁹ The US policy enabled something what was unimaginable just few years before - Russian troops deployed to Bosnia under NATO command.⁴⁰

From the Serbian point of view, US policy could be described as hostile because NATO bombed Serbian positions.⁴¹ Furthermore, “the Administration’s goal was to remove Karadzic⁴² from the power or significantly weaken him through diplomatic pressure, thus defusing the pressure for a military operation.”⁴³

In her article *How Belgraders Remember the NATO Bombings*, Orli Friedman describes “what was it that ordinary residents of Belgrade⁴⁴ experienced during the

³⁸ Ibid., 318.

³⁹ Ibid., 348.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 361.

⁴¹ Ibid., 63.

⁴² Bosnian Serbs leader.

⁴³ Holbrook, *To End a War*, 340.

⁴⁴ Belgrade is Serbian capital.

months of the NATO bombings.”⁴⁵ In the article, Friedman describes the experience of the interviewed people who encountered 78 days of NATO bombing from March 24, to June 10, 1999.⁴⁶ Friedman discovered that “the NATO bombing in Serbia is often addressed as if it had nothing to do with the war in Kosovo.”⁴⁷

Memories of the NATO bombings as framed in the new Serbian calendar and more recent mnemonic practices are contributing to the lack of empathy and to a sense of a frozen conflict between Serbs and Albanians in relation to the recent war in Kosovo. Such lack of empathy remains the main challenge for scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict transformation in their search for ways to bring about change in the relational dimensions between groups in conflict.⁴⁸

Russian influence orientated sources

References that provide information on Russian influence in the region are mostly articles published or announced on internet. It is important to notice that they came from different sources and different points of view. They are aligned according to the date of their creation in order to give the impression of development of Russian policy towards South-East Europe.

In November 2009 Center for Strategic and International Studies from Washington and Hellenic Centre for European Studies (EKEM) from Athens established a team with two Working Groups in order “to provide concrete and focused policy recommendations for a consequential U.S.-Greek policy approach toward the Western

⁴⁵ Orli Fridman, “How Belgraders Remember the NATO Bombings,” Balkan Transitional Justice, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/how-belgraders-remember-the-nato-bombings>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Balkan countries.”⁴⁹ Their third report titled *Re-linking the Western Balkans: The Energy Dimensions* describes the region’s main energy challenges.

These include an over-dependence on the utilization of oil and coal in electricity generation, which also has a direct negative environmental impact; high dependency on oil and gas imports that are necessary to meet domestic demand; a severe lack of energy efficiency; underdevelopment of the renewable energy sector; a lack of market integration; and a lack of interconnectors across the region.⁵⁰

For this thesis purpose it is very important to notice that “when it comes to gas imports the region is almost totally dependent on Russian exports that are shipped to Croatia, Serbia, and BiH via a Soviet-era pipeline through Hungary.”⁵¹ “The danger of over-dependence on a single supply source became evident in the region during the largest energy crisis Europe has faced since the Arab oil embargo and the Iranian Revolution of the 1970s: the January 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis.”⁵² Also, it gives information that “Serbia has decided to join the Russian-Italian South Stream project.”⁵³ “This Serbian-Russian alliance is illustrated by the majority (51 percent of shares) acquisition in 2008 of Serbia’s oil and gas state company N.I.S. by Gazprom, which was

⁴⁹ CSIS-EKEM Task Force, “ESIS-EKEM policy Report Number Three: Relinking the Western Balkans: The Energy Dimension,” accessed April 13, 2016, <http://csis.org/publication/csis-ekem-policy-report-number-three>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

heavily influenced by the diplomatic isolation of Serbia from the West over Kosovo issue.”⁵⁴

At the 10th Biennial Conference of the Australasian Association for Communist and Post-Communist Studies in Canberra, 3-4 February 2011, Nina Markovic presented the paper *Russia’s Role and Influence in The Balkans in The 21st Century: Investment, Energy and Politics*.⁵⁵ The paper states that Russian foreign policy encountered a significant transformation from “incoherence”⁵⁶ under Yeltsin to new “assertiveness”⁵⁷ under Putin and Medvedev Presidencies (2000 - ...). Using its position as “a major Euroasian energy provider”⁵⁸ “by the end of first decade of 21st century, the Russian Federation become a powerful political and strategic actor seeking to influence global events in a multi-polar era.”⁵⁹ “Energy has become a key tool in shaping Russian foreign policy . . . in the wider global and narrow regional aspects.”⁶⁰

Countries in the Balkans which are not exclusively dependent on Russian gas, such as Romania, have been able to adopt . . . a more antagonistic approach towards Russia . . . Other regional countries which are almost entirely dependent

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Nina Markovic, “Russia’s role and influence in the Balkans in the 21st Century,” Academia.edu, accessed April 13, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/5244456/Russias_role_and_influence_in_the_Balkans_in_the_21st_century.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

on Russia for gas supplies, such as Bulgaria and Serbia, have had a much narrower geo-political maneuvering space in which to operate.⁶¹

The paper also emphasizes a long history⁶² of good relations between Russia and Serbia as a good base for present cooperation and better starting position in a strategic competition between Russia and other actors in the Balkans (namely, the EU and US).⁶³ Further, the paper brings a narrow description of relationships among the main actors in Serbia.

The Serbian Government and parliamentarians are conducting a balancing act between Russia, the EU and NATO. Russian companies are holding the majority stakes in Serbia's former state-owned oil company . . . The EU . . . is the Serbian Government's key foreign policy priority. Serbia's parliamentarians remain divided on the issue of Serbia's relations with NATO, primarily because of experiences with NATO's military strikes.⁶⁴

Cooperation between Russia and Serbia are not limited only to economy. 'In October 2009 during President Medvedev's visit to Belgrade, Russia and Serbia signed further agreements in the field of education, sports, culture, parliamentary cooperation, air travel and science and technology.'⁶⁵ One of the controversial agreements is the establishment of a regional crisis response center in the town of Niš with Russian military personnel.⁶⁶ The paper is the most valuable reference on the ways and whys about Russian influence in Serbia and the Balkans.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

In their article *Balkan Energy Corridors as a Source and Potential for Solving Security Problems*, the authors Ivica Đorđević and Marko Filijović argue that geopolitical significance of the Balkans can positively influence regional cooperation and decrease regional instability caused by ethnical tensions and great powers competition for control over the same corridors.⁶⁷ They describe the Balkans as a linking point of numerous energy corridors that connect energy exporters in Caucasian region and further Eastward (Russia is the largest energy exporter to Europe, and often described as “energy hegemon”⁶⁸ with the main energy consumers on the West of Europe.⁶⁹ Also, the article describes a competition between great powers in the region that is visible through their intention to build two opposite energy corridors: Russian South Stream and US-favored Nabucco corridor.⁷⁰ The South Stream will connect Russia-Black Sea-Bulgaria-branching off to Greece and Italy-Serbia-Hungary-Austria while the Nabucco will pass through Turkey-Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria.⁷¹ The article conclusion is that “the ability of the states within the region to recognize their mutual interests and jointly pursue

⁶⁷ Ivica Đorđević and Marko Filijović, “Balkan Energy Corridors as a Source and Potential for Solving Security Problems,” *Megatrend Review*, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://megatrendreview.nezbit.edu.rs/files/pdf/EN/Megatrend%20Review%20vol%2008-1-2011.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

their realization can largely neutralize the tendencies of great powers to pursue their own interests through the (mis)use of individual local actors.”⁷²

Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, from February 2013 “is a systemic description of basic principles, priorities, goals and objectives of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.”⁷³ For the thesis purpose, it is a significant view on NATO and the Balkans.

Russia maintains a negative attitude towards NATO’s expansion and to the approaching of NATO military infrastructure to Russia’s borders in general as to actions that violate the principle of equal security and lead to the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe.⁷⁴

Russia aims to develop comprehensive, pragmatic, and equitable cooperation with Southeast European countries. The Balkan region is of great strategic importance to Russia, including its role as a major transportation and infrastructure hub used for supplying gas and oil to European countries.⁷⁵

In the article *Don’t let Moscow Open a New Battlefield in Bosnia* Kurt Bassuener argues for stronger approach of the West towards Russian support to separatism of Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodig.⁷⁶ Bassuener describes the visit of Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov to Milorad Dodik in the context of the referendum in Crimea

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, “Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,” The Russian Government, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://archive.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/1e5f0de28fe77fdcc32575d900298676/869c9d2b87ad8014c32575d9002b1c38!OpenDocument>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kurt Bassuener, “Don’t let Moscow Open a New Battlefield in Bosnia,” Academia.edu, accessed April 5, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/6692260/Ne_dajte_Moskvi_da_otvori_novi_front_u_Bosni_-_Oslobodjenje_April_7_2014.

2014. Bassuener argues that it is a clear sign of support to self-determination of the Serbian part of BiH. Bassuener also describes the Dodik's intention to connect the separation of Republika Srpska with the similar processes in Europe as the separation of Montenegro from Serbia, referendum in Scotland and Catalonia.⁷⁷ As dissolution of BiH would almost certainly caused an instability in the region, Bassuener advocacy for the Western strategy towards BiH which will mitigate Russian influence in the country.⁷⁸ Kurt Bassuener is associate of Democratization Policy Council in Sarajevo and valuable reference for situation in BiH.⁷⁹

Alexander Pivovarenko is research associate within Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Slavonic Studies and Russian International Affairs Council expert.⁸⁰ In his article *Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans; Soft Power through Investment* he gives an audit of Russian investments in six Balkan countries in the context of interaction of Russian and their policies, and also emphasizes the importance of the Balkans for Russian policy.⁸¹ Pivovarenko brings numerous exact data about Russian investments in the region. Based on his analysis, Pivovarenko divided six countries in three groups.

Serbia, which has historically enjoyed a "special relationship" with Russia, can undoubtedly be called a *traditional Russian partner*. Montenegro can be placed in the same category, but with certain reservations . . . Montenegro's foreign policy

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Alexander Pivovarenko, "Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans; Soft Power through Investment," RIAC, accessed April 5, 2016, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=3744#top-content.

⁸¹ Ibid.

is more Western-oriented; and a number of large investment projects have failed.⁸²

Bosnia and Herzegovina may be called *prospective partners*, especially . . . Republika Srpska . . . and Macedonia. Large Russian capital arrived relatively recently (2007-2012), but its prospects are good thanks to the countries' geographically fortunate position . . . and the population and current political establishment's favorable attitude. Russian companies also have major business there.⁸³

Slovenia and Croatia can be viewed as *potential partners*. Although Russian projects have not yet charted particular success, these countries may find Russia an attractive alternative to their current western partners due to the EU's economic crisis.⁸⁴

Christopher Braemer, from University of Bologna prepared a paper *Between the fronts–Serbia's course between Russia and the EU* for the Seminar “Economics of Transition in Central and South-East Europe during academic year 2014/2015.”⁸⁵ In the paper, Braemer separately describes Serbian-Russian and Serbian-EU cooperation, and then describes Serbian foreign trade and foreign direct investment. The paper describes several important agreements that are the basis for Serbian-Russian cooperation: the Free Trade Agreement from August 2000, the Protocol on Expanding the Free Trade Agreement from 2011, and assignment of a strategic partnership between the two countries and military bilateral agreement in 2013.⁸⁶ These agreements enabled a broad

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Christopher Braemer, “Between the fronts–Serbia's course between Russia and the EU,” Academia.edu, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/12754620/Between_the_fronts._Serbias_economic_course_between_Russia_and_the_European_Union.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

political, economic, scientific, military and bilateral cooperation. Still, Russian focus remains on cooperation in the energy sector with the project of South Stream and investment in Serbian Oil industry.⁸⁷ Although the process of association between Serbia and the EU started and Serbia opened the negotiation for EU membership, it is burdened with the “Kosovo issue, the consolidation of its democracy and its agricultural and rural development”⁸⁸ and the fact that “if Serbia joins the EU, the free trade agreements with Russia . . . will become invalid.”⁸⁹ Comparing the data on Serbia’s direct foreign investment and foreign trade, the EU takes the lead in both area, and Russia is close to the top.⁹⁰ The paper argues for closer cooperation between Serbia and the EU, and opposes that with Russia because Serbia could gain more benefits in cooperation with the EU than with Russia. As the main problem in Serbia–EU relations remains different points of view on the Kosovo issue where Serbia enjoys a full-scale Russian support on the issue.⁹¹

Eduard Abrahamyan in April 2015 described a new shift in Russian foreign policy.⁹²

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Eduard Abrahamyan, “Pax Russia in the Balkans: Serbia between Myth and Reality,” Academia.edu, accessed April 7, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/12168617/_Pax_Russica_in_the_Balkans_Serbia_Between_Myth_and_Reality.

During the last decade, Russia's regional policy in the Balkans was based on pragmatism and provided the frames of Realpolitik. Such policies were mostly motivated by the region's energy and transit capacities of Russia's role as a dominant energy supplier to the EU. The recent events in the Ukraine became a precursor of the radical new approach towards the Balkan through the prism of the recently declared ideology of Eurasianism that was officially adopted by Russia.⁹³

The Eurasian ideology is a theoretical pivot of Russian state nationalism, pursuing, once Vladimir Putin assumed the office, to resurge the influence of the "Great Russia" in the rest of Eurasia.⁹⁴

Abrahamyan argues that Serbia has a special role in this policy.

Until recently, Moscow was firmly of the opinion that Serbia, bearing deep contradictions with the West on Kosovo and its distinctive incompatibilities with the basic principles of Atlanticism, must sooner or later assume a role of provider of Russia's geopolitics in Eastern Europe.⁹⁵

Besides a description of Serbian-Russian cooperation, Abrahamyan brings a couple of new perspectives on the triangle: Serbia–EU–Russia.

[T]he substantive 'trap' for Serbia was loans and the most vulnerable share—Kosovo and Metohija. During his official visit, Dmitriy Medvedev allocated to the Serbian Government a loan of 1 billion Euros, suggesting diplomatic support in the issue of Kosovo, thereby fuelling the troubled ties among Serbia and EU on Kosovo status. Simultaneously, Medvedev's authority hailed Serbia's strive to join the EU, treating it as Moscow's 'Trojan Horse' in the EU.⁹⁶

Abrahamyan also emphasis an establishment of "Russian-Serbian mutual

Humanitarian Centre near the town of Niš . . . where Russians will likely attempt to set

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

up a Russian military object.”⁹⁷ Abrahamyan concludes that “Russia basically succeeded in enhancing its influence in the Balkans.”⁹⁸

Russian national security strategy updates from December 2015 gives us a Russian point of view on international relations and most importantly, Russia–NATO relations.⁹⁹

The document acknowledges that the strengthening of Russia, its independent foreign and internal policy prompts the US and its allies to initiate counteraction, as they are striving to maintain their dominant position in the world. Thus, they pursue a policy of constraint of Russia, which envisages exerting political, economic, military and information pressure.¹⁰⁰

Russia see the US as a power who wants to keep its leading position in the world, while Russia’s intention is to ensure strategic stability and mutually beneficial partnerships in the context of a multi-polar world.¹⁰¹ In that context, “the expansion of NATO and its approach to Russia’s borders has created a threat to national security.”¹⁰²

Expanding the force potential of NATO and endowing it with global functions which are implemented in violation of international legal norms, the block’s military activation, its continued expansion, and the approach of its military infrastructure to Russian borders, all create a threat to national security.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Blinov, “Russian National Security Strategy for 2016.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

EU/NATO orientated sources

In the article *Explaining Difficult States: The Problems of Europeanization in Serbia*, Jelena Subotić explains “Serbia’s reluctance to Europeanize by exploring why Serbian elites persistently refused to fulfill the EU principal requirement—full cooperation with the Hague war crimes tribunal—even when it meant getting off the road to Brussels”¹⁰⁴. In theory, before countries join the EU, they have to Europeanize—to adjust their laws, institutions, and political practice to those of the EU.¹⁰⁵

To force states to Europeanize, the EU has often used the tools of conditionality, where the EU provides rewards to candidate states and withholds the reward if states fail to comply.¹⁰⁶

In Serbia, the EU applied a very direct . . . policy of issue linkage, tying Serbian compliance with international justice requirements . . . mostly reduced to cooperation with the Hague tribunal.¹⁰⁷

Subotić explains that this strategy was abused in Serbia where their elites reduced it even more just to “trade-in war crimes suspects for EU talks”¹⁰⁸ without delegitimization of “nationalist ideology that had brought on the conflict in the first place”¹⁰⁹ and “opened the political space for nationalist ideologues to devalue the entire

¹⁰⁴ Jelena Subotić, “Explaining Difficult States: The Problems of Europeanization in Serbia,” Academia.edu, accessed April 7, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/2578496/Explaining_Difficult_States_The_Problems_of_Europeanization_in_Serbia.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

enterprise of justice.”¹¹⁰ The article concludes that “issue linkage is a powerful tool for policy change, but it can produce the opposite effect from the one intended if it is not followed by a comprehensive package of broader social transformation.”¹¹¹

As aforementioned, the Athens Working group from the joint team of Center for Strategic and International Studies from Washington and Hellenic Centre for European Studies (EKEM) from Athens produced a guide in November 2010 about “the state of relations between NATO and the Balkans.”¹¹² They emphasize that that “Euro-Atlantic integration is seen as bringing stability and security through democratic and economic reforms but there are political and economic costs along the path to membership.”¹¹³ Further, the guide brings separately an overview of each country in the Western Balkans and its relations with NATO. For this thesis’ purpose we will focus on BiH, Montenegro and Serbia. In BiH, “serious internal divisions and the dysfunction of the Dayton Constitution”¹¹⁴ are the main problem.

The nation’s three main groups (Bosnian Muslim, Croats and Serbs) are running in opposite directions. Bosnian Muslims are demanding a new constitution giving the central state more powers. Croats are calling for the creation of an

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² EKEM Athens Working Group: Transforming the Balkans, “NATO and the Western Balkans; New Strategic Concept, Old Challenges,” Academia.edu, accessed April 8, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/3164313/NATO_and_the_Western_Balkans_New_Strategic_Concept_Old_Challenges.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

autonomous entity within the broader state and Serbs are threatening to call a referendum on independence.¹¹⁵

One of the unique aspects of BiH was that it had three armies, and “it took 10 years to merge three armed forces into one,”¹¹⁶ but “clear dysfunctions remain.”¹¹⁷

Still, political elites remain for now united in the goal of NATO accession. But there are strong indications that Bosnian Serb politicians may withdraw their support in the future if political crisis in the country escalates.¹¹⁸

Montenegro is on a good path to become a next NATO member. In 2006 it adopted a new National Defense Strategy where NATO and EU represent a strategic objective.¹¹⁹ Montenegro is “currently preparing its Annual National Program (ANP), participating in UN, EU, and NATO peacekeeping exercise and addressing public support for NATO.”¹²⁰ Conditions in Serbia are the opposite.

Serbia never declared an interest in membership despite participating in the Partnership for Peace program since 2006 and opening its mission to NATO in 2010. . . . The stillvivid memories of the bombing campaign against Serbia, coupled with a sense of injustice at most NATO members recognizing Kosovo’s independence taint the image of the Alliance in Serbia. As a result, Serbia is the Western Balkan country least interested in joining NATO.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Joana Kosho in 2012 investigated the transformation of Balkan states on their approach to European integration.¹²² She recognized “a triple transition in the Balkans; from war to peace, from a communist command economy to a liberal market economy, and from a single-party rule to a pluralist democracy,”¹²³ and gives a separate overview on EU path for each country. For the thesis purpose the most important are BiH, Montenegro and Serbia. BiH has the same problem as aforementioned since it “continues to be highly ethnically divided, economic and political unstable and has not yet developed the ability to self-governance.”¹²⁴ Although Montenegro “applied for full membership in December 2008,”¹²⁵ and achieved “progress in meeting the political criteria for accession . . . still has to improve its administrative capacity.”¹²⁶ In the Serbian case, the advance toward the EU “was conditioned by the cooperation degree of Serbia with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.”¹²⁷ Kosho concludes that “that the difficulties of the integration project and the internal problems of these countries are mainly products of their history.”¹²⁸

¹²² Joana Kosho, “The Balkans and European Integration: The Balkan States Transformation Within the European Perspective,” Academia.edu, accessed April 8, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/22795201/The_Western_Balkans_Transformation_Within_the_European_Perspective.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Nicholas Tzifakis in *The EU approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina*

describes “the causes of EU failure in Bosnia.”¹²⁹

The EU has attempted to push forward essential reforms for the stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, presenting them as conditions for progress towards EU accession.¹³⁰

He argues that “the EU has not managed to deal successfully with three main challenges: adjusting the process to the needs of an ethnically divided state; preserving the credibility of accession conditionality; and conveying the proper message on how to comply with EU rules.”¹³¹ Tzifakis concludes that Europeanization is not enough to stabilize BiH.¹³²

Nikola Tomić presented the paper *When the carrot is not sweet enough* at the International Studies Association Annual Convention in April 2013 in San Francisco.¹³³ Tomić investigate “the distinction between the effectiveness of normative power and the power of conditionality of the EU on foreign policy in the Western Balkans,”¹³⁴ and uses Serbia as a “case study.”¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Nicholas Tzifakis, “The EU approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina,” LSE, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2012/08/08/eu-approach-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Nikola Tomić, “When the carrot is not sweet enough,” WordPress.com, accessed April 5, 2016, https://suedosteuropaeischehefte.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/tomicn_sh_2_1.pdf.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

The European Council of June 27th/28th, 2013 decided to give Serbia a conditional date to start accession negotiations with EU countries at the beginning of 2014 as part of Serbia's path to EU membership.¹³⁶

Tomić further explains that the main “problem Serbia is facing in terms of EU conditionality is the relationship of Serbia with Kosovo.”¹³⁷

Serbia is expected to build a constructive solution for Kosovo that is supposed to promote stability and progress in the region. Such a demand is delicate considering that the Serbian public is becoming more and more Euro-sceptic and protectionist, strongly wishing for Kosovo to remain an integral part of Serbia. This conditions the Serbian government, preventing it to find a timely and comprehensive solution for Kosovo and especially for the Albanian population living there.¹³⁸

Tomić concludes that “the EU should in the case of Serbia, and in its attempts to influence Serbian foreign policy, not rely on conditionality.”¹³⁹ Instead, “the EU should . . . rely on its normative power.”¹⁴⁰

In the article *On all four sides: shock of Serbian diplomacy's Five years plan* from 2013, Ekaterina Entina describes Serbian foreign policy from 2008 to 2013.¹⁴¹ She explains the four priorities in Serbian foreign policy established by President Boris Tadić: the EU, Russia, China and the US,¹⁴² and how neither relationship satisfies Serbian

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ekaterina Entina, “On all four sides: shock of Serbian diplomacy's Five years plan,” Academia.edu, accessed April 7, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/17203180/On_all_four_sides_shock_of_Serbian_diplomacy_s_Five_years_plan_in_Rivista_di_Studi_Politici_Inetnazionali_December_2013.

¹⁴² Ibid.

strategic goals. Entina argues that only “the EU offers Serbia development strategy,”¹⁴³ and the EU does not have an alternative to it.

Any formal political cooperation between Serbia and the US is strongly emotionally charged, both because of memories of the bombing in 1999 and as a result of an uncompromising US position on the issue of Kosovo.¹⁴⁴

Entina also states that Serbia cannot gain anything significantly through the cooperation with Russia and China, because that cooperation is not balanced. Both countries are focused more on their own economic interest in Serbia than on mutual interest.¹⁴⁵

Entina concludes that “the lack of an alternative development strategy to the one focusing on the EU leads to disorientation in foreign policy.”¹⁴⁶

Rebecca Cruise and Suzette R. Grillot conducted a research in 2013 on regional security community and published the results in *Regional Security Community in the Western Balkans: A Cross-Comparative Analysis*.¹⁴⁷ Their conclusion is “that elite-level security community does not necessarily (or quickly) lead to public-level security community.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Rebecca J. Cruise and Suzette R. Grillot, “Regional Security Community in the Western Balkans: A Cross-Comparative Analysis,” Academia.edu, accessed January 10, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/14516418/Cruise_Rebecca_and_Grillot_Suzette_Regional_Security_Community_in_the_Western_Balkans_A_Cross-Comparative_Analysis_Journal_of_Regional_Security_8_1_2013_7-24.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

In the Western Balkans, public-level security community remains underdeveloped despite increased interaction and some signs of security community among governments. There remains significant distrust among populations and there is significant cynicism about the steps governments are undertaking to enhance regional cooperation.¹⁴⁹

For the thesis' purpose, this source is an important description of relationship between Croatia and Serbia.

Additionally, the two leaders of the region, Serbia and Croatia, have populations supporting only limited cooperation. Except for Croatians seeking cooperation with Bosnia, a country with significant numbers of ethnic Croats, Croatia and Serbia both gave rather low responses advocating for regional cooperation. On the other hand, the respondents from these two countries seem to favor cooperation with an outside player—Croatia with the US and Serbia with Russia. This may be a consequence of the EU policy of regional and bilateral approaches to membership. As membership nears, as it has for Croatia and by many accounts Serbia, the relationship with the EU becomes more important than cooperation with the region.

Ilknur Semsek in *Balkans in Between the Others* argues that Balkans is one of the most crucial areas in the world because it's geographical position between the EU, Russia and Turkey.¹⁵⁰ Although the article does not offer much information on geopolitical significance, it states openly the two phase Western framework for the Balkans. Three primary tasks are: the US prevention of Russia spreading influence over the Balkans, integration of Balkan nations with the West and restriction of Russian military and political activity.¹⁵¹ In the renewal phase of the Balkan geopolitics, the US will consider military and security aspects of the system rather than economic structure, including: "the architecture of the Dayton Agreement, putting Serbs under pressure to leave Russian

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ilknur Semsek, "Balkans in Between the Others," Academia.edu, accessed March 20, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/14793483/Balkans_in_Between_the_Others.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

biases in Bosnia and Kosovo, ensuring Slovenia's and Croatia's NATO membership in order to be able to control the Adriatic coast, and Romania's and Bulgaria's EU membership alongside supporting other new Balkan state's NATO membership."¹⁵²

In the article *The Western Balkans tinderbox* from January 2016, John O'Brian set a state of emergency. He argues that the year 2016 may be "a watershed year for the European Union."¹⁵³ O'Brian argues that the Eurozone crisis and refugee crisis brought "the sense of pessimism"¹⁵⁴ and "enlargement fatigue" in the EU. Also, the EU absorbed 13 new members in the last decade and needs some time to consolidate.¹⁵⁵ The promise from EU-Western Balkans summit at Thessaloniki in June 2003 how "The future of the Balkans is within the European Union"¹⁵⁶ will not be easy to achieve since "the Western Balkans have disappeared under the radar of EU policy-making."¹⁵⁷ Taking into account the recent violent history of the region and present economic, political and ethnic problems "the European Union urgently needs to renew its commitment to the Western Balkans' European future."¹⁵⁸ "A failure to do so may well see 2016 produce a new

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ John O'Brian, "The Western Balkans tinderbox," Euroactiv.com, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/opinion/the-western-balkans-tinderbox/>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Balkan crisis which could become the final nail in the coffin of the European integration project.”¹⁵⁹

Croatia orientated sources

In the article *Republic of Croatia: The Gateway to South-East Europe*, Vlatko Cvrtila describes the geopolitical position of Croatia and opportunities that come from that position.¹⁶⁰

As a democratic and economically developed country, whose interests are not any different from those of Western democratic states, the Republic of Croatia may be a decisive factor in the future processes of stabilization in the region. It occupies a very important place in the regional geopolitics structures and might influence the future development of the neighboring countries and regions, especially through the continuation of democratic transition and the improvement of the relations with its neighbors.¹⁶¹

Cvrtila states that Croatia’s extremely complex geopolitical position terminate Croatian geopolitical behavior. Croatia still has border disputes with all neighboring countries except Hungary.¹⁶² Similarly, as *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the Balkans*, Cvrtila explains the Croatian position as the crossroads of three culture-religious areas: Western European, Eastern European and Islamic.¹⁶³ From a historical point of view, Croatian geopolitical position is the crossroads of German influence from the North-West, Romanic/Italian influence from the West, Hungarian from the North and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Vlatko Cvrtila, “Republic of Croatia: The Gateway to South-East Europe,” 10hrcak, accessed April 15, 2016, http://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=43389&lang=en.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Turkish from the South-East.¹⁶⁴ Cvrtila concludes that complex geopolitical positioning was the reason for Croatia's turbulent and tragic history, but today it could be used as a Croatian advantage.¹⁶⁵

Croatian Parliament declared *National Security Strategy of Republic of Croatia* in 2002.¹⁶⁶ Since meanwhile Croatia has become a NATO and the EU member, it is obvious that this Strategy is obsolete, but for this thesis purpose it provides enough information about Croatian security environment, potential challenges and instruments for their mitigation.¹⁶⁷ The strategy also finds Croatia's position as a crossroad of three European regions: Central Europe, South-East Europe and Mediterranean.¹⁶⁸ Because of its position and the shape, Croatia is very sensitive to any security issue in BiH.¹⁶⁹ As a main problem related to BiH, that can cause potentially insecurity, is the fact that BiH is still under international supervision because the central state administration does not function. Yugoslavia¹⁷⁰ was identified as the main source of instability during past period, but now it is a potential partner, and Croatia expects further development of cooperation.¹⁷¹ As a

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Croatia Ministry of Defense, *Croatian National Security Strategy*, accessed April 12, 2016, <https://www.morh.hr/hr/zakoni-i-strategije/strategije/103-strategija-nacionalne-sigurnosti-republike-hrvatske19032002.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Yugoslavia that time consisted of Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro declared independence in 2006.

main threat to the regional security, the Strategy identified possible conflict of interests in attempts to gain influence over transition area between the regions rich with natural resources (Caucasus and Central Asia) and the region of main consumers in West Europe.¹⁷² As a solution, Croatia sees the building of a secure environment on global and regional level through membership in NATO and the EU of all neighboring countries.¹⁷³

In their study, *Republic of Croatia: changes in geopolitical position in relation to the “Western Balkans” from 1990s to accession in the European Union*, the authors, Petar Kurečić and Brankica Crljenko describe the transformation that Croatia encountered from geopolitical point of view regarding neighboring countries.¹⁷⁴ They agree with some Holbrooke’s statement that Croatia had some kind of US support during the wars in former Yugoslavia as a regional promoter of the US interests in the region and counterbalance to Serbia and its ally–Russia.¹⁷⁵ After the war, Croatia made significant progress toward Euro-Atlantic integration and was often used as an example for other countries in the region. Also, it was a message to them that European path is possible and open for everyone who wants to join. That was a period of regional

¹⁷¹ Croatia Ministry of Defense, *Croatian National Security Strategy*.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Petar Kurečić and Brankica Crljenko, “Republic of Croatia: changes in geopolitical position in relation to the “Western Balkans” from 1990s to accession in the European Union,” Researchgate, accessed April 12, 2016, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272604382_Republika_Hrvatska_promjene_geopolitickog_polozaja_u_odno_su_na_Zapadni_Balkan_od_1990-ih_do_ulaska_u_Europsku_uniju_Republic_of_Croatia_changes_in_geopolitical_position_in_relation_to_the_Western_Balk.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

cooperation that helped stabilize the region. Joining NATO 2009 and EU 2013 started a new era in relations because Croatia broke its ties with geopolitical region of the Balkans. Yet, it is important that Croatia remains politically and economically present in the region. Relations with BiH and Serbia are crucial for national security. With the end of a war geopolitical confrontations were not ended. Croatia has open border issues with them, but also a good trade surplus. Joining BiH and Serbia to NATO and EU should be the goal of Croatian foreign policy as a solution for regional security.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are numerous research methods and even more numerous areas of research, but each research method does not correspond to each thesis. The author endeavored to apply Lipson's criteria for research methodology selection. According to Lipson, every research method should meet two criteria.¹⁷⁷ It should:

1. address questions posed in a thesis project;
2. use skills researcher currently has or can acquire during the project.

Both criteria will be examined in this chapter.

Thesis concept

The thesis has several features that contribute to the thesis' complexity and have decisive influence on research methodology selection. First, the thesis' content describes a splice of different policies in the region and various ways to influence them. Secondly, the thesis consists of two parts, different in their nature, but interrelated.

The main part represents an answer to primary research question "How Croatia should use its instruments of national power to mitigate Russian influence in the region?" In order to answer the first research question correctly, the researcher has to closely examine Russian influence in the region. That fact is embedded in secondary research questions: "Why are, countries in the region, susceptible to the Russian influence?" and

¹⁷⁷ Charles Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2005), 92.

“How does Russia project its influence in the region?” Answers to secondary research questions form an ancillary part of the thesis.

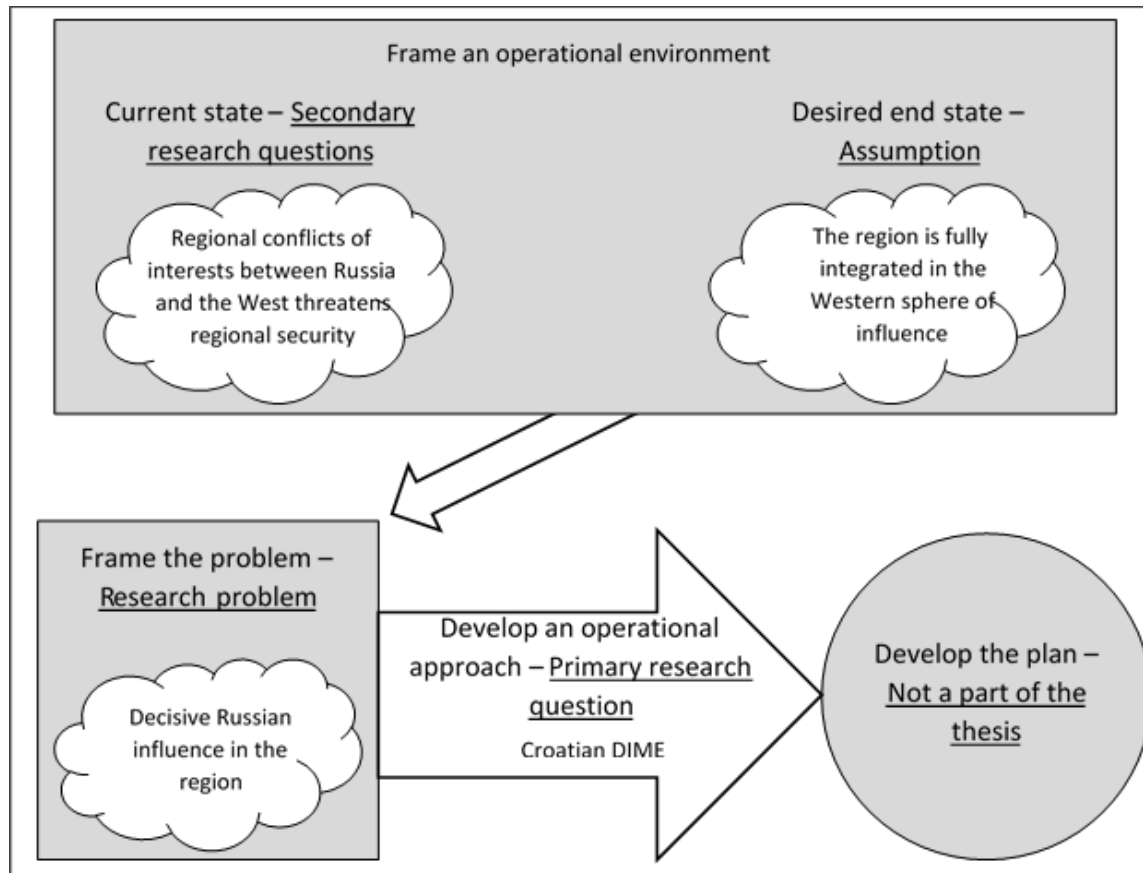


Figure 2. Thesis concept

Source: Created by the author from Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 17 May 2012), 2-6.

Another fact that contributes to thesis complexity is its structure. The thesis is based on Army Design Methodology as another way of problem solving, and research methodology is incorporated in it as figure 2. represents. “Current state” refers to regional

conflict of interests and it is described in secondary research questions. “Desired end state” is described as an assumption. Decisive Russian influence is identified as a main problem that prevents transition from current state to end state. The answer to the primary research question represents an operational approach to the problem. The plan, which would be usually developed from operational approach, is to detail and it will not be examined in the thesis.

Qualitative research

Giving the complexity of the thesis, the research methodology was carefully chosen in order to provide correct answers to research questions. According to Creswell, researchers should conduct qualitative research “when the problem needs to be explored; when a complex, detailed understanding is needed; when the researcher wants to write in a literary, flexible style; and when the researcher seeks to understand the context or settings of participants.”¹⁷⁸ With these criteria as a base, qualitative research remained as a single option. Combinations of different approaches were applied for different questions as a part of qualitative research.

Analysis and comparison of sources were joined with narrative research in order to answer secondary research questions. Sources were divided into three groups: history Russia, and the West. First, groups were analyzed separately through narrative approach. Sources were aligned by the date from the oldest forward looking for a clear pattern of events. Thereafter, groups were compared simultaneously, looking for relationships between them, and action–reaction connections in triangle “regional issues–Russian

¹⁷⁸ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication, 2013), 65.

influence–Euro-Atlantic integration.” The “history” group could be divided into two subgroups. One comprised sources related to the past relations of Russia with the Balkan states, and another comprised sources related to conflicts during dissolution of Yugoslavia, with a special focus on unresolved issues remaining today. The group “Russia” encompassed all sources related to Russian policy toward Southeast Europe in a context of global competition between Russia and the West. Besides a description of ways Russia projects their interest in the region the group included analysis of various analytical data related to Russian economic and military cooperation with the region. The third group, “the West” included various articles about processes of integrating the region’s countries into NATO or EU with a special focus on particular obstacles in these processes. Answers on secondary research questions should provide information about areas in which Russian influence was imposed and in which Croatian policy should act in order to mitigate it.

In order to answer the primary research question “How Croatia should use its instruments of national power to mitigate Russian influence in the region?” the research encompassed analysis of sources and comparison of two case studies. Among other sources, the main document analyzed was the Croatian National Security Strategy and its perspective towards the regional issues, Russian influence, and regional access towards western integrations. Given the areas of acting from answers on secondary research questions, case study comparison should complete the answer on the primary research question related to the “intension” of Croatian actions. According to Lipson, if a researcher uses case studies, he must explicitly answer two basic questions:

1. Why is he using cases and not some other method?
2. Why has he chosen these particular cases?¹⁷⁹

For this thesis' purpose, case studies were used to examine different ways in which one country or country alliance can influence policy of another country in order to accommodate it to its custom interest. The case study on US policy towards Yugoslavia in the period of Truman and Eisenhower administrations explored a "soft" approach of cooperation and assistance between two countries while the case study on EU policy towards Serbia explored a "firm" approach of conditionality between changes in the Serbian policy and benefits provided by the EU. Exploring the ways and means of US and EU policy towards Yugoslavia and Serbia and their outcomes in aforementioned case studies the research should direct the Croatian approach towards the use of its DIME in order to mitigate the Russian influence in the region. Particular cases were used because both refer to the region, although in different time period.

Research characteristics

The research encountered several characteristics of qualitative research from the list defined by Creswell in his book.¹⁸⁰ They included multiple methods of research, researcher as key instrument, reflexivity, complex reasoning and holistic account. Multiple methods of qualitative research were applied and combined in different phases of the process in order to produce best possible outcome. Besides that, research included

¹⁷⁹ Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis*, 101.

¹⁸⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 45-47. The remains are: natural setting, participant' meaning, emergent design.

gathering of different forms of data from multiple sources enabling objective point of view on material collected.

Researcher plays a significant role in any qualitative research and a thesis always somehow reflects the researcher's background.¹⁸¹ The fact that the author is from Croatia describing a Croatian perspective on South-East Europe security challenges has its advantages and disadvantages. Motivation and qualification are advantages and were already discussed in chapter 1. Since the process of achieving understanding from figure 3. was the base of the research process, the main issue for the author was how to apply his knowledge and experience while simultaneously avoiding potential influence of personal biases on the process. The CGSC environment of critical and creative thinking and materials from leadership course helped mitigate the risk.

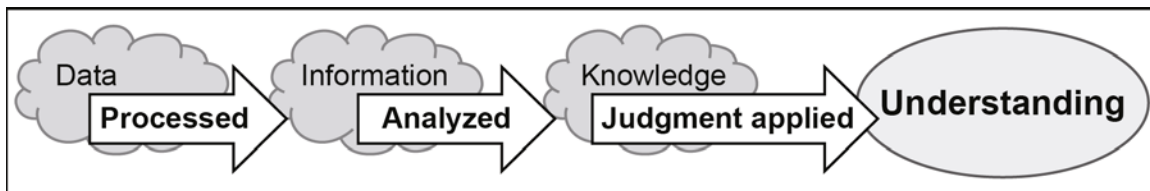


Figure 3. Achieving understanding

Source: Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 17 May 2012), 2-7.

¹⁸¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 47.

Using complex reasoning, the thesis was built “bottom up”.¹⁸² It means that data were categorized in bigger pieces of information which were then examined from multiple perspectives until interconnections among them were established.

Taking a holistic account as a characteristic, the goal of the research was not simply to answer research questions, but to describe each step of Army design methodology applied in the thesis and create a broad operational picture through framing an operational environment, framing the problem and developing an operational approach.

¹⁸² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 45.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Russian influence

The newest *Russian national security strategy* and *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* provide a frame for further development of Russian policy towards the region. According to both strategic documents, Russia's ultimately goal is the creation of strategic stability through a multi-polar world in which Russia and the US (among other regional powers) would be equal partners in discussing global issues. In that sense, the leading position of the US in the world does not contribute to the stability, but conversely, it puts international relationships out of balance and creates conditions for instability. From that perspective, NATO is seen as an organization that supports and strengthens the US leading position in the Europe. Accordingly, documents define NATO as a threat to the Russian national security.

Besides NATO, the attention is also given to economic stability as a part of total stability. Russia is fully aware that a strong economy provides better options in global competition and increases a possibility of achieving a goal of a multi-polar world. It is one of premises to counteract the US as the biggest world economy. Simultaneously, Russia is self-aware of its economic disadvantages such as low level competition and, especially, resource-dependent economy.¹⁸³ In that sense, it is vital for Russia to ensure the security of energy supplies from its resources all the way to consumers. According to

¹⁸³ Maksim Blinov, "Russian National Security Strategy for 2016: Key Updated Points," Sputnik International, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160102/1032599111/russia-national-security-strategy.html>.

The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Russia is looking on South-East Europe as a central place for infrastructure that would transport Russian oil and gas to European countries.¹⁸⁴ The region of South-east Europe became even more important after the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, because it enables connections of energy producers from Russia and the Caspian region with energy consumers in Central and West Europe bypassing Ukraine.¹⁸⁵

The prevention of NATO enlargement and ensuring energy corridors from Russia to Europe are two facts that drives Russian policy in the region. Russia invests a lot of effort in the region to promote its cause. Russian actions are intensifying and encompasses use of all national instruments of power. It started with economic cooperation, followed with diplomacy, and recently escalated to military cooperation.

Economy

Economy, especially the energy sector, is the base of Russian influence in the region. Therefore, gas pipelines have a special value for Russia. This facts create a situation of competition between the West and Russia. From one side, Russia seeks to ensure construction of infrastructure that will make Europe even more dependent on Russia, while from another side, the West intends to deny Russian access in the region and build infrastructure that will connect Europe with energy sources in the Caspian region. Two proposed projects of building gas pipelines from figure 4. reflected this

¹⁸⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*.

¹⁸⁵ Đorđević and Filijović, “Balkan Energy Corridors as a Source and Potential for Solving Security Problems.”

competition.¹⁸⁶ EU and the US supported the Nabucco Project, while Russia supported Project South Stream. Nabucco was planned to pass through Turkey–Bulgaria–Romania–Hungary–Austria. South Stream had a similar projection passing through Russia–Black Sea–Bulgaria–branching off to Greece and Italy–Serbia–Hungary–Austria.¹⁸⁷ It is interesting to notice how both pipelines had the same end-point, but different starting point. Russian project South Stream favored Russian sources of natural gas, and Nabucco favored Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, and potentially Iranian sources of natural gas.

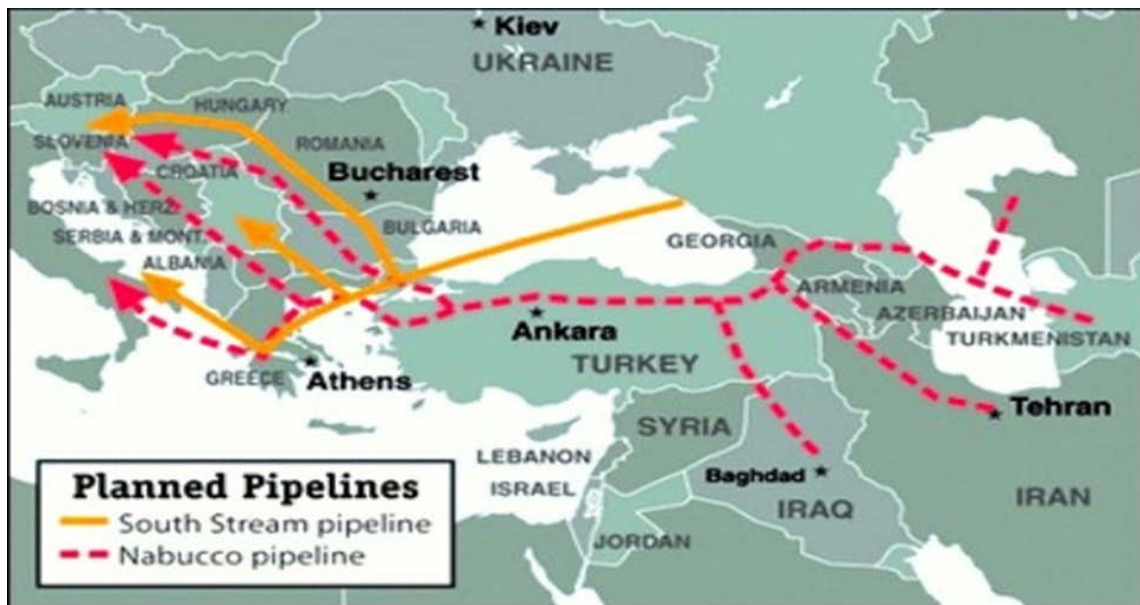


Figure 4. Planned gas pipelines corridors in the region

Sources: IBG Blog, “The South Stream project and the Europe Union’s Energy Supply Security,” accessed April 28, 2016, <http://isaburakgonca.blogspot.com/2011/12/south-stream-project-and-european.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Dorđević and Filijović, “Balkan Energy Corridors as a Source and Potential for Solving Security Problems.”

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

Unlike Nabucco, South Stream has a two major obstacles to overcome. With the exception of Serbia, countries positioned on its planned route are NATO and EU members (figure 5). Therefore, NATO and the EU can influence its construction, which is what exactly happened. After work on the project South Stream already started, the EU pressed Bulgaria to quit the project in June 2014.¹⁸⁸ Russia dropped it too; but, only temporarily. Since it is very important in the overall Russian strategy towards Europe, Russia declared that it intends to initiate the project again.¹⁸⁹ At the same time, Nabucco was modified as a branch of a new planned Trans Adriatic pipeline with a main route connecting Greece, Albania and Italy.¹⁹⁰

Since both pipeline projects have the same end-point, it would not be economically cost effective to build both pipelines. The Nabucco pipeline would anchor stronger NATO and EU positions in the region tying the regional countries closer to the West. With the realization of the South Stream project, the region would encounter a significant increase of Russian influence. That fact would be even more important for countries that seek to become NATO or the EU members because it would widen a gap between the region and the EU and NATO.

¹⁸⁸ BBC, "Russia drops South Stream gas pipeline plan," accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30283571>.

¹⁸⁹ William Powell, "Choice of export route is for Russia to make: Gazprom adviser," Natural Gas Europe, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/choice-of-export-route-is-russias-gazprom-adviser-29245>.

¹⁹⁰ EuroActiv, "EU backed Nabucco project 'over' after rival pipeline wins Azeri gas bid," accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/eu-backed-nabucco-project-over-after-rival-pipeline-wins-azeri-gas-bid/>.



Figure 5. EU and NATO members in South-East Europe

Source: Stratfor, “The Russia-West Rivalry in the Balkans,” accessed April 25, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/problems-foreign-powers-find-balkans>.

Pipelines have strategic importance, but Russia is very interested in a broader economic cooperation with the regional countries. According to Markovic, “by creating a stronger economic base for the Russian enterprises in the Balkans, the Russian government has sought to extend its geopolitical reach there.”¹⁹¹ Russia supports their interests by investing significant amounts in the region’s economies. Although the energy sector represents the basis for cooperation and it is a target for the majority of Russian

¹⁹¹ Nina Markovic, “Russia’s role and influence in the Balkans in the 21st Century,” Academia.edu, accessed April 13, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/5244456/Russias_role_and_influence_in_the_Balkans_in_the_21st_century.

investments, Russia does not limit its investment in only that particular area, but seeks to develop stronger relations wherever is possible. Pivovarenko recorded some interesting data about Russian investments in the region in period from 2000 -2013 as is shown on figure 6.¹⁹²



Figure 6. Russian investment in the region

Source: Created by author from Alexander Pivovarenko, “Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans: Soft Power through Investment,” Russian International Affairs Council, accessed April 30, 2016, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=3744#top-content.

From data represented, it is obvious that Serbia holds a leading position in South-East Europe according to Russian investments. In 2000 Serbia and Russia signed free trade agreement that enabled Serbia as the only country that is not member of

¹⁹² Alexander Pivovarenko, “Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans; Soft Power through Investment,” Russian International Affairs Council, accessed April 5, 2016, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=3744#top-content.

Commonwealth of independent States (CIS)¹⁹³ free access on CIS market.¹⁹⁴ Montenegro and BiH follows while Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia are behind. If the Russian investment is compared with the population or size of each economy, the order would be different, but not significantly. No matter how data are represented, it is visible that Serbia, BiH, and Montenegro are in the Russian focus, while the rest of countries encountered only a small percentage of Russian investment in the region.

According to Pivovarenko, Serbia received approximately \$ 2.85 billion of Russian investment in period 2003–2012.¹⁹⁵ In 2003 Russian company Lukoil¹⁹⁶ bought the 79.5 percent of Serbian enterprise Beopetrol.¹⁹⁷ Beopetrol's main activities are the retail and wholesale trade in oil and oil derivatives on its network of 180 filling stations.¹⁹⁸ "This made Lukoil the second largest supplier of oil products in the country and a potential regional leader."¹⁹⁹ By 2013, Russian Gazprom²⁰⁰ acquired 56.15 percent

¹⁹³ CIS of 9 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

¹⁹⁴ Christopher Braemer, "Between the fronts–Serbia's course between Russia and the EU," Academia.edu, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/12754620/Between_the_fronts._Serbias_economic_course_between_Russia_and_the_European_Union.

¹⁹⁵ Alexander Pivovarenko, "Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans; Soft Power through Investment," RIAC, accessed April 5, 2016, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=3744#top-content.

¹⁹⁶ According to their official site, Lukoil is one of the world's biggest vertically integrated companies for production of crude oil and gas, and their refining into petroleum products and petrochemicals.

¹⁹⁷ Pivovarenko, "Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans."

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

of Serbian multinational oil and gas company NIS.²⁰¹ Gazprom now enjoys control over both refineries in Serbia, a retail network of 500 filling stations in Serbia and the region.²⁰² Besides the energy sector, Serbia houses 71 different projects of Russian investment from different areas of the economy (metalworking, chemical and electrical industries, construction, tourism, and agriculture).²⁰³ On January 11, 2013 Russia and Serbia signed an agreement providing Serbia a loan of \$ 800 million for modernization of Serbia's railway system by Russian Railways, and the purchase of Russian locomotives.²⁰⁴ That makes Serbia the first country in Europe in which Russian Railways operate.²⁰⁵ Taking into account a broad economic cooperation with Russia, Serbia refused to impose sanctions against Russia due to the Crimea crisis.²⁰⁶ But, as Entina concludes, Serbian interest is not necessary complemented by Russian interests.

In terms of economic cooperation, this area is attractive to Russia because of its market, real and potential, but Russia's objective here is not to help development of the Serbian economy, but to implement their own economic interests.²⁰⁷

Russia is the biggest investor in Montenegro. In 2010, 32 percent of country's enterprises were owned by Russian capital.²⁰⁸ Russian investment in Montenegro has

²⁰⁰ Gazprom holds the world's largest natural gas reserves. The Company's share in the global and Russian gas reserves amounts to 17 and 72 per cent respectively.

²⁰¹ Pivovarenko, "Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans."

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Abrahamyan, "Pax Russia in the Balkans."

²⁰⁷ Entina, "On all four sides: shock of Serbian diplomacy's Five years plan."

different features from that in Serbia. “It tends to be individual and recreational, rather than governmental and industrial.”²⁰⁹ Since the Montenegrin economy is based on tourism, the majority of Russian investment includes real-estates, hotels, restaurants, marines, and other touristic infrastructure. Besides tourist resorts, Russian investors pursued an aluminum plant in Podgorica²¹⁰ that accounts for about 15 percent of Montenegro’s Gross Domestic Product.²¹¹ Although Montenegro joined sanctions against Russia due to the Crimea crisis, Russian capital is still heavily present in the country.

Russian investments in BiH has unique features. They are almost completely realized in the Serbian part of the country, named Bosnian Serb Republic (RS), while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the other part of the country, encountered significantly less Russian investment. The main portion of Russian investment in RS encompassed the purchase of only two oil refineries in Bosanski Brod and Modric by the Russian company Zarubezhneft.²¹² Also, Russian private investors were involved in modernization of thermal power plants and the development of coalfields in Ugljevik.²¹³ Russian investment in the RS also have and political implications.

Revenues from production helped strengthen RS’s political power, gain economic independence from the central government in Sarajevo and the High

²⁰⁸ Pivovarenko, “Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans.”

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Capital of Montenegro.

²¹¹ Markovic, “Russia’s role and influence in the Balkans in the 21st Century.”

²¹² Pivovarenko, “Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans.”

²¹³ Ibid.

Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, appointed by the international community under the terms of the Dayton Accords.²¹⁴

Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia were not fruitful countries for Russian investment until now, but they have a different prospect. While Croatia and Slovenia as NATO and the EU members are strongly connected to western economies, Russia sees numerous opportunities for investment in Macedonia. “Given the country’s prime location at the crossroads of the southern Balkans near Italy, Turkey and the North Africa coast, the development of a railway or air hub in Skopje²¹⁵ would seem viable.”²¹⁶ Lukoil already operates 25 filling stations in the country, and Russia’s Protek Group built a new pharmaceutical factory in Skopje.²¹⁷ “Promising fields of investment include agriculture, light industry, and religious tourism.”²¹⁸

Diplomacy

When Putin took power in Russia in 2000, the course of Russian foreign policy changed. “During the 1990s, Russia displayed weaknesses and policy incoherence in its diplomatic, political and economic sectors, as it was undergoing a transition from state socialism to democratic governance structures and market economy.”²¹⁹ In such conditions, Russian influence on the Yugoslav crisis was minor and Russia could not

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Macedonian capital.

²¹⁶ Pivovarenko, “Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans.”

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Markovic, “Russia’s role and influence in the Balkans in the 21st Century.”

prevent a strong engagement of NATO and the US. Under Putin's Presidencies, Russia consolidated its position and "had become a powerful political and strategic actor seeking to influence global events in a multi-polar era."²²⁰ Different authors call this new course of Russian foreign policy different names such as "Eurasian ideology", "Russian World" or "Slavism", but all agree that it is based on pragmatism.²²¹ "The changes in Russia's foreign and strategic policy, and its stronger economic performance over the past decade, enabled Russia to pursue more robust engagement in the Balkans."²²²

Similarly to the economic relations, Russian diplomacy is focused mainly on Serbia and then on BiH, apropos RS. "On May 24, 2013 Russia and Serbia signed the Declaration on Strategic Partnership."²²³ Besides extension of political, economic, scientific, military and financial cooperation, it showed the Russian point of view towards the region. In that sense, Serbia represents a major Russian pivot in the Balkans and can expect Russian support in regional issues.

Kosovo is one of the biggest issues in the region. In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia. The US and the majority of the EU countries recognized Kosovo. Serbia considers Kosovo as a part of Serbia. Russia supports the Serbian position and denies any access of Kosovo to any international association, including the

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Abrahamyan, "Pax Russia in the Balkans."

²²² Markovic, "Russia's role and influence in the Balkans in the 21st Century."

²²³ Pivovarenko, "Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans."

UN.²²⁴ As one of five permanent UN Security Council members, Russia has the power to veto on any UN decision against its interest. In 2015 Russia used that right and vetoed UN resolution that “would condemn the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica during the Bosnian war²²⁵ as a crime of genocide.”²²⁶ The resolution was proposed by the United Kingdom (UK) and it would put Serbia in a tough position because Serbian support to Bosnian Serbs. Russia was the only UN Security Council member that opposed the resolution.²²⁷

Russia also supports the Bosnian Serbs proclaimed right to self-determination. Russia connects the case with the separation of Crimea from Ukraine, and South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia. Russian officials regularly conduct meetings with Bosnian Serb officials giving the RS the impression of a state.²²⁸ In that sense, in 2013 the RS opened a Representative Office in Russia.²²⁹ The RS, as an entity, joined the project South Stream in 2012, although BiH as a state did not.²³⁰

²²⁴ George Friedman, “Russia: Kosovo and the Asymmetry of Perception,” Stratfor, accessed May 1, 2016, https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/russia_kosovo_and_asymmetry_perceptions.

²²⁵ In July 1995, Serbian forces killed approximately 8 000 men in vicinity of Srebrenica.

²²⁶ AlJazeera, “Russia vetoes UN genocide resolution on Srebrenica,” accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/russia-vetoes-genocide-resolution-srebrenica-150708150057291.html>.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Kurt Bassuener, “Don’t let Moscow Open a New Battlefield in Bosnia,” Academia.edu, accessed April 5, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/6692260/Ne_dajte_Moskvi_da_otvori_novi_front_u_Bosni_-_Oslobodjenje_April_7_2014.

²²⁹ Pivovarenko, “Modern Russia in the Modern Balkans.”

²³⁰ Ibid.

Military

Within their strategic partnership, Russia and Serbia seek to strength their military connections. In 2013 they signed a military bilateral agreement on defense cooperation after Serbia already joined the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization.²³¹ Serbia additionally announced it will maintain military neutrality and does not intend to join NATO.²³²

In the last few years, military cooperation between Serbia and Russia has increased. Military exercises are a common aspect of cooperation of the two armed forces. In 2014 the Russian military conducted a big joint exercise with their Serbian counterparts in Serbia.²³³ Serbia purchased Russian military helicopters.²³⁴ However, the biggest concern in the region is caused by the establishment of a Russian-Serbian mutual Humanitarian Centre in the vicinity of Niš, in southern Serbia. It was “founded in 2012 for the needs of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations, where Russians likely attempt to set up a Russian military object.”²³⁵ Russian military forces in the center of the Balkans, surrounded by NATO countries would not represent a stability factor in the region.

²³¹ Christopher Braemer, “Between the fronts–Serbia’s course between Russia and the EU,” Academia.edu, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/12754620/Between_the_fronts._Serbias_economic_course_between_Russia_and_the_European_Union.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Abrahamyan, “Pax Russia in the Balkans.”

²³⁴ Entina, “On all four sides: shock of Serbian diplomacy’s Five years plan.”

²³⁵ Abrahamyan, “Pax Russia in the Balkans.”

Information

Russia has a very detailed accesses towards the region that includes use of “so called cultural diplomacy.”²³⁶ The main goal of cultural diplomacy is to promote a positive image of Russian policy abroad by influencing the public opinion or political groups in the region. For that purpose it will use the informational facilities in Russia or in a targeted country.²³⁷

The main cause of concern is the increasing number of Russian ‘cultural’ institution, spreading offices in Serbia and Republika Srpska like ‘Russkiy Mir’ (‘Russian World’ Foundation), Serbsko-Russ Youth communities, Orthodox communities that are in fact controlled by Russia, etc. Along with cultural functions, these centers are literally suitable of provoking ethnic and religious intolerance as they have an emphasized ultra-right bias.²³⁸

Summary

Russian strategy towards the region evolved significantly from the time of Yugoslav crisis. At that time influence was limited to the energy sector, mainly on oil and gas shipment without any indication to confront NATO or the EU interests in the region. Today, analyzing all data, the conclusion is that Russia uses the full spectrum of its instruments of national power to impose its influence in the region and bring some of regional countries into its zone of influence as is shown in figure 7.

Russian regional strategy is part of a broader world level strategy of creating a multipolar world, described by Russian national security strategy. Russian regional strategy is based on two main ends: prevent regional countries from joining NATO and

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

ensure that the region will be used as an energy-hub connecting energy sources in Russia with consumers in Western Europe. As a result, Europe would be more dependent on Russia and more susceptible to Russian requests. Energy is a Russian tool to impose its influence.

Prevention of NATO enlargement can be achieved through creation of instability and strengthening relations between Russian and regional militaries, mainly Serbian. Russian military already conducts regular exercises with the Serbian armed forces while establishment of Humanitarian Centre in Serbia could be the first step in Russian regional military presence. Russia can leverage its support to Bosnian Serbs leadership within separatist intentions and increase instability in the region. That would not only prevent BiH access towards NATO, but probably create a broader regional crisis involving Croatia and Serbia. Russian support towards Serbian positions regarding Kosovo creates long-term potential for the regional crisis by preventing both countries from establishing closer western integration.

<u>End state:</u> In multipolar world the region is part of Russian zone of influence		
<u>Ends:</u>	<u>Ways:</u>	<u>Means:</u>
Prevention of NATO enlargement in the region	Establishing and strengthening connections between Russian and regional militaries	Military exercises
		Russian military presence in the region
	Creation of instability	Support to RS self-determination
		Supporting Serbian position regarding Kosovo independence
The region is energy-hub between West Europe and Russia	South Stream project	Purchase of regional energy sectors companies by Russian enterprises
		Regional dependence on Russian oil and gas
	Influencing regional countries policies	Strengthening economic connections
		Strengthening political connections

Figure 7. Russian strategy towards the region

Source: Created by the author.

Building energy infrastructure that will bring Russian oil and gas to the Western Europe is more important for Russia, but harder to accomplish. Since the region is encircled by the EU and NATO countries, they have decisive influence on deciding which infrastructures will be built. Nevertheless, Russia continues to promote the South Stream project, and maintain its influence on Serbian policy through a huge investment in the Serbian energetic sector, making the region more dependable on Russian energy sources. Providing economic benefits for the Serbian economy, Russia strengthens economic, but consequently and political links with Serbia separating it from the West.

One of the principal foreign policy tools, which Russia has resorted to is the use of soft power and targeted financial investments to boost its economic, political and strategic leverage in the Balkans.²³⁹

One of the strategy's interesting features is putting Serbia and Serbs as a nation in the center of the strategy. Besides Serbia as a national state of Serbs, the strategy emphasizes BiH and Montenegro. Both countries have a significant portion of Serbian population. Serbs represent a majority of the population of the RS as one of two entity that form the state BiH. Reasons for such a strategy's profile could be numerous. Deep historical and cultural relations between Russia and Serbia foster good relations. The other reason is confrontation between the West and Serbs during the Yugoslav crisis where Serbs perceived the West as their opponent. Serbia also takes a central piece of the region with good connections North–South and East–West. Present interrelations in the region make possible the accomplishment of Russian intentions only through cooperation with Serbia because other countries would not accept such as close relations with Russia. Those reasons validate the theory that in Eastern Europe, and especially in the region, political subjects are not states but nations. States are only a nation's instrument to accomplish nation's interests. In that sense, nations in the region will support their national state policy regardless of nation's actual state policy. Serbs from BiH, Croatia or Montenegro will support Serbian policy. Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia will support Albanian state policy, and Croats from BiH will support Croatian state policy.

²³⁹ Markovic, "Russia's role and influence in the Balkans in the 21st Century."

Western integrations and regional issues

Western integrations refers to NATO and the EU. The author will closely examine different paths of three Croatian neighboring countries: BiH, Montenegro and Serbia towards western integrations. Special attention will be given to major obstacles on that path whose removal can speed up accession of aforementioned countries. According to Declaration from the EU–Western Balkans summit in Thessaloniki, all regional countries expressed adherence towards virtue of democracy and human rights. At the same time, the EU expressed its competence to accept new members from the region when these countries reach a required level of coherence with the EU.²⁴⁰ Also, NATO membership is perceived as a “major strategic choice”²⁴¹ for a majority of the regional countries. Although all regional countries consider the EU and NATO as an area of stability and economic prosperity, results of an effort invested in accomplishing the required standards are not satisfied.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH signed Stabilization and Association Agreement as the first step towards the EU in 2005.²⁴² Since then, little has been achieved. According to Kosho, BiH does not

²⁴⁰ Declaration from EU-Western Balkans Summit, Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003, European Commission, accessed May 2, 2016, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm.

²⁴¹ EKEM Athens Working Group: Transforming the Balkans, “NATO and the Western Balkans; New Strategic Concept, Old Challenges,” Academia.edu, accessed April 8, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/3164313/NATO_and_the_Western_Balkans_New_Strategic_Concept_Old_Challenges.

²⁴² Joana Kosho, “The Balkans and European Integration: The Balkan States Transformation Within the European Perspective,” Academia.edu, accessed April 8,

meet minimal criteria to conduct a negotiations process. “The EU accession process requires functional institutions at all levels and an effective coordination mechanism for dealing with the EU, allowing the country to speak with one voice.”²⁴³ Unlike that, BiH continues to be ethnically divided, economically and politically unstable, and without ability for self-governance.²⁴⁴

The nation’s three main groups (Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs) are running in opposite directions. Bosnian Muslims are demanding a new constitution giving the central state more powers. Croats are calling for the creation of an autonomous entity within the broader state and Serbs are threatening to call a referendum on independence.²⁴⁵

Obstacles on country’s NATO access seem to be the same. BiH signed membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2010. Public support towards NATO membership splits across ethnic boundaries. In the Federation of BiH, support is 90 percent for joining NATO, while in RS 63 percent of public opposes.²⁴⁶ There are strong indications that Bosnian Serb politicians may withdraw their support towards closer relations between NATO and BiH.²⁴⁷

2016, http://www.academia.edu/22795201/The_Western_Balkans_Transformation_Within_the_European_Perspective.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ EKEM Athens Working Group.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

Montenegro

From the western perspective, Montenegro is the positive story in the region. According to the National Defense Strategy adopted in 2006, full NATO and the EU membership in shortest possible period is the strategic orientation for Montenegro.²⁴⁸ In 2010, the EU generally agreed to give Montenegro status of the candidate, but before the negotiation will be opened, it has to fulfil certain criteria. Since then, Montenegro achieved progress regarding the political criteria, but still has to improve the country's administration.²⁴⁹ In 2015 Montenegro was invited to join NATO and probably will become the next NATO member in the next year or year and a half. Russia strongly opposed that decision and publicly condemned it. Also, Russia provides financial support to groups that oppose NATO and imposed sanctions on Montenegro's agricultural products.²⁵⁰ With Montenegro in NATO, the whole northern Mediterranean coast will be controlled by NATO countries. Serbs, who represent roughly a third of the population, opposed independence in 2006, and many are against joining NATO.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Evelyn N. Farkas, "Montenegro will join NATO—and that matters," *Defenseone*, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/12/montenegro-will-join-nato-and-matters/124733/>.

²⁵¹ Steven Beardsley, "Tiny Montenegro on track to join NATO," *stripes.com*, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/tiny-montenegro-on-track-to-join-nato-1.179999>.

Serbia

Serbian relations with the EU are stretched between two major facts. From one side, Serbian government is fully aware that only the EU membership can ensure significant economic development. Despite a large Russian investment and economic benefits, Russia cannot compete with economic strength of the EU. From the other side, the main EU condition for Serbian access towards the EU is normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo as a contribution to the regional stability. Although it is never mentioned that Serbia has to officially recognize Kosovo as independent state, in practice, any cooperation with Kosovo institutions would mean exactly that. The Serbian government will probably continue the path towards the EU, but public support for joining the EU decreased from 65 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2015.²⁵² NATO in Serbia is perceived as an alliance that made war against Serbia and Serbian interests in the region. Despite joining the Partnership for Peace Program in 2006, and opening its mission to NATO in 2010, Serbia declared its military neutrality.²⁵³ Serbian officials connect Serbia - NATO relations with the status of Kosovo. In that context, NATO support to the establishment of Kosovo Security Forces negatively affected that relations.

²⁵² Ekaterina Entina, "On all four sides: shock of Serbian diplomacy's Five years plan," Academia.edu, accessed April 7, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/17203180/On_all_four_sides_shock_of_Serbian_diplomacy_s_Five_years_plan_in_Rivista_di_Studi_Politici_Inetnazionali_December_2013.

²⁵³ EKEM Athens Working Group: Transforming the Balkans, "NATO and the Western Balkans; New Strategic Concept, Old Challenges," Academia.edu, accessed April 8, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/3164313/NATO_and_the_Western_Balkans_New_Strategic_Concept_Old_Challenges.

Croatian Operational approach

Croatian position

Due to its shape and location, Croatia has a very sensitive position. Although some authors assert that Croatia cannot be considered as part of South-East Europe since it has joined the EU, geographically the Croatian position is still susceptible to any instability produced in the region. As figure 5 shows, Croatia has a very disparate shape covering a small area with a very long boundaries. The result is a very small operational depth of Croatian territory. For comparison, Croatia by surface is approximately same size as West Virginia, but bounded with approximately 40 percent longer border.²⁵⁴ BiH basically divides Croatia into two long but tiny branches connected with a small portion of land between. The majority of Croatian territory, except far North and West, is within 100 km from the border with BiH or Serbia. With an economy with a big share of tourism,²⁵⁵ Croatia cannot afford to have any kind of instability on its borders. According to the *National Security Strategy of Republic of Croatia*, one of the main threats to regional stability is competition between two external powers for influence in the region. This is exactly how the current situation in the region could be described.

From the Croatian perspective, Russian intention to impose its influence in the region is one of the destabilizing factors that prevents regional access towards western integrations and affiliated stability. The other factors are unresolved regional issues related to national intentions to create national states that will encompass all or a majority

²⁵⁴ CIA, "Croatia," The World Fact Book, accessed May 4, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/hr.html>.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

of members of a nation. It is not possible to achieve it without a change of existing borders. A combination of these factors makes the problem solution at least complex. Additionally, due to their ethnic mixes and weak governments, regional countries are easy to destabilize from internal or external factors.²⁵⁶

Faced with a potential problem, Croatia can and has to react. Although burdened with its own problems, Croatia has some potential to mitigate Russian influence. It will not be decisive with overnight results, but in perspective can contribute to regional stability. In that sense, Croatia has several advantages and disadvantages. It understands regional problems much better than the foreign officials. After a long and often difficult accession process, Croatia become an EU and NATO member. Hence, it is familiar with obstacles on that path, and its experience can be very useful. Although the current state of Croatian economy is not satisfying, Croatia is the most developed country in the region.²⁵⁷ Besides that, there are a few Croatian disadvantages in the region. Croatia has to align its policy with those of the EU and NATO. Also, Croatian relations with regional countries are burden with bilateral issues.

Since Serbia is the center of Russian regional strategy, logically, Serbia has to be in the focus of Croatian response. According to Entina, “stabilizing and positive development of relations between Serbia and Croatia determines the trend in the region.”²⁵⁸ Taking into account recent history of regional wars, establishing relations

²⁵⁶ Đorđević and Filijović, “Balkan Energy Corridors as a Source and Potential for Solving Security Problems.”

²⁵⁷ CIA, “Croatia.”

²⁵⁸ Entina, “On all four sides: shock of Serbian diplomacy’s Five years plan.”

between two countries that will result with a decrease of Russian interest would be challenging task.

Orientation of Croatian DIME–Case study

The thesis examined two case studies in order to direct Croatian operational approach towards Russian influence in the region. Both case studies describe how one country can be influenced to change its policy, but their outcomes were different. While US policy towards Yugoslavia can be considered as a limited success, the EU policy towards Serbia achieved opposite result from its initial intention.

The EU can be described as an international actor with significant economic power, but without any military power. Consequently, it uses “diplomacy, cooperation and economic incentives to convey their interests and shape the perceptions and attitudes of other actors.”²⁵⁹ The relationship between the EU and candidate or potential candidate countries has a special feature. In that relationship “the EU exercise its political and economic power through conditionality.”²⁶⁰ Conditionality basically means that the EU sets its rules as conditions that candidate countries have to fulfill in order to receive EU rewards. In this case, EU membership and cohesive funds represents rewards.

The EU is willingly pursuing its interest by imposing its rules of the game to the other actor, which than is coerced to some extent to accept the rules for being able to continue the relations with the EU.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Tomić, “When the carrot is not sweet enough.”

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Among other conditions, good neighborly relations and regional cooperation, state building and democratization, free trade and transition, are specially emphasized in process of enlargement in South-East Europe. In the context of Serbia, “the necessity of collaborating with the Hague Tribunal” was added.²⁶² Serbia did not have any special issues with the majority of conditions except with two. Cooperation with the Hague Tribunal was, for a long time, an open issue between Serbia and the EU, until recently Serbia arrested suspects for war crimes and fulfilled these obligation.²⁶³ The issue that remains today is the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo where “Serbia is expected to build a constructive solution for Kosovo that is supposed to promote stability and progress in the region.”²⁶⁴

Such a demand is delicate considering that the Serbian public is becoming more and more Euro-skeptic and protectionist, strongly wishing for Kosovo to remain an integral part of Serbia.²⁶⁵

In that sense, Serbian government has a little space for maneuver. “Serbia’s foreign policy position is that Kosovo will never be an independent state, and will remain a part of Serbia’s territory.”²⁶⁶ In that sense, Serbia refuses to participate in events where Kosovo participates as an independent country. From the EU perspective, Serbia is not fulfilling the condition of good neighborly relations and regional cooperation.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

This example clearly shows limitation of EU conditionality approach towards other countries. In order to be successful, conditionality approach has to offer rewards that “outweigh the costs of accepting certain conditions.”²⁶⁷ In this case, “the current Government of Serbia (and the majority of politicians in the Serbian Parliament), regardless of the nature of their interest, value preserving the territory of Kosovo as a part of Serbia more than Serbia’s EU membership.”²⁶⁸ As a way to influence Serbian policy, this conditionality approach has failed and left a gap between Serbia and the EU.²⁶⁹ That gap was quickly fulfilled by Russia backing the Serbian side in Kosovo issue.

The US policy towards Yugoslavia during the Cold War represents another approach in influencing other country’s policy. The break between Tito and Stalin in 1948 came as a surprise for the US who considered Tito as the loyal Soviet’s ally.²⁷⁰ The US conclusion was “that these events were a significant opportunity for the United States and its allies to undermine the Soviets’ control of the international communist movement.”²⁷¹ The ultimately goal of the US was to deny or decrease Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia had a significant role in the newly adopted US strategy.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Lees, *Keeping Tito afloat*, 43.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 61.

²⁷² Ibid., 81.

After the split, the Truman administration adopted a policy of “keeping Tito afloat” in order to sustain the damage his defection inflicted on the Kremlin rather than to achieve any immediate “Titoist” gains in the satellites.²⁷³

Till the end of 1950s, Yugoslavia received \$ 1.5 billion in military and economic assistance.²⁷⁴ Besides the help, the US and Yugoslavia established broader economic and military ties. The US even assumed that Yugoslavia would participate on NATO’ side, if war in Europe broke out.²⁷⁵ The Eisenhower administration promoted “Tito’s influence among the satellites and persuading him to affiliate Yugoslavia with NATO.”²⁷⁶ The intention was to show that the communist regime could exist without Soviet dominance and encourage other communist countries to follow the Yugoslavia example. Yet, Tito’s “growing commitment to the nonaligned movement and his willingness to reestablish relations with the Soviets” terminated the program of help. The US political and economic support continued until dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990s.²⁷⁷ Although, the ultimate goal of the strategy had not been achieved (communist satellite states in Europe did not follow Yugoslavia example and Yugoslavia did not become NATO member), “Tito’s continued absence from the Soviet orbit” was declared “success enough.”²⁷⁸

Cross-examination of these case study resulted with a two conclusions. In order to be able to influence national policy, a ‘bridge’ between two sides has to be established

²⁷³ Ibid., XIII.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 227.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 136.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., XIV.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., XV.

through which that influence will flow. The relationship of conditionality where one side conditions its reaction on another side's action is not suitable and it is likely to cause the opposite effect. Also, in an attempt to influence the other side, its perspective has to be examined and expectation for that relationship must be determined. The Croatian operational approach should meet these recommendations.

Croatian lines of effort

The Croatian operational approach towards the problem represents an answer to the primary research question: "How should Croatia use its instruments of national power (Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic–DIME) to mitigate Russian influence in the Region?" It consists of ten objectives divided into four lines of effort; one for each instrument of national power. They are aligned with National Security Strategy of Republic of Croatia. The Ends in this approach are diametrically opposed to those in the Russian regional strategy from figure 7. and encompass diversification of Europe's sources of energy and integration of regional countries into western associations.

The diplomacy line of effort contains two crucial objectives. Solution of bilateral issues is the most complex to achieve and requires time. It has special value because it is in active relations with other goals because they have a mutual effect. Other goals will facilitate resolution of bilateral issues. As a NATO and EU member, Croatia should share its experience in access to the institutions, but can also influence these organizations in order to actuate them on acceptance of new members.

The information line of effort has only one objective. It is promotion of western values. Basically they include democracy, human rights and market economy, but regional cooperation too. The only way Croatia has to transmit information is to act

according its values and serve as an example. Since Croatia does not have any special way to transmit information, this LOE is closely related to diplomacy.

Since NATO is a military alliance, and Russia considers it a threat, military cooperation in the region has special meaning. Historical conflicts in the region had militaries that made war against each other, now they have to cooperate. Nevertheless, military cooperation is a political decision, and areas of cooperation are broad. Smart Defense is a NATO project that allows nations to establish and maintain high level military capabilities due to joint training, education and procurement. It is not limited to only NATO countries. Multilateral activities are an opportunity to closely connect non NATO nations with the alliance by inviting them to NATO activities, primarily exercises. Humanitarian assistance increases a positive perception of a foreign military among civil populations of a country where humanitarian assistance is conducted. The goal is based on Croatian helicopter support to BiH, Montenegro and Serbia during natural disasters.

Since the Russian strategy is mainly based on economy, economic line of effort contains the most goals. The first priority is diversification of energy suppliers. Construction of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) terminal on Croatia island²⁷⁹ of Krk directly fulfil that end. It enables the import of gas from all around the world including the US. Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) would bring gas from the Caucasian region to Europe and definitely decrease the possibility of construction of the South Stream pipeline. Croatian investment in the region could increase connections between regional economies and through the Croatian economy with the EU economy. Since the region is not physically

²⁷⁹ Reuters, "Croatia confirms plans for new LNG terminal in 2016," accessed May 4, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/croatia-lng-project-idUSL6E8I36O620120703>.

connected with Russia, building transportation connections between Croatia and its neighbors is an opportunity to closer connect the region and the EU.

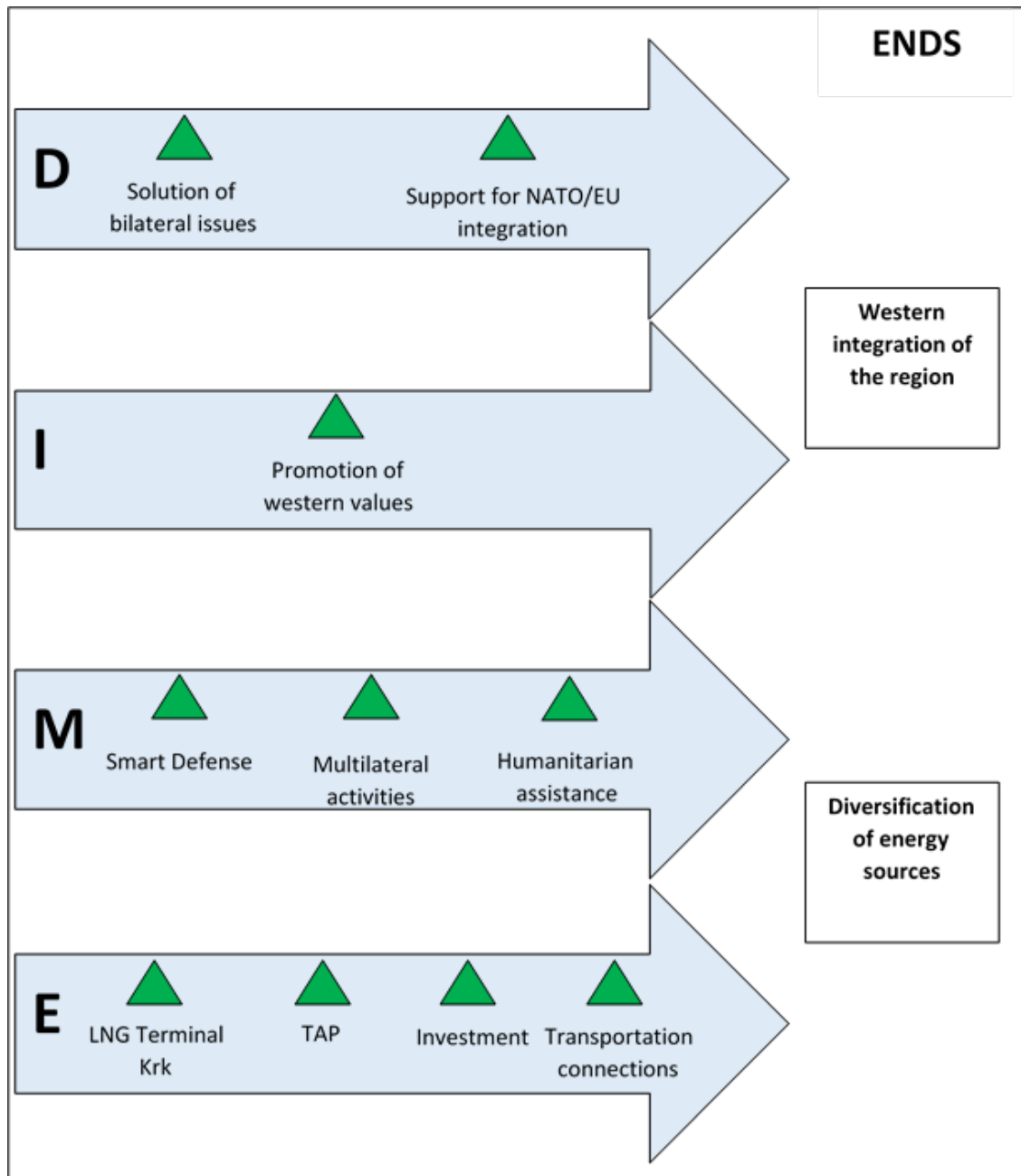


Figure 8. Croatian lines of effort

Source: Created by author

The Croatian operational approach towards regional problem of Russian influence is based on regional cooperation and respect of mutual interest. Some of these objectives are possible to achieve in a relatively short period, while some will require a longer term period. Also, broader political consensus is required to conduct a recommended operational approach, since it would be project for several government period.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

The basic purpose of this research was to examine security challenges in South-East Europe derived from Russian attempts to impose its influence in the region. The topic is very actual and can be compared with Russian actions in other regions, namely Ukraine, Caucasus region or Syria. The research encompassed examination of Russian action in the region within broader Russian strategy to create a multipolar world. In that sense, Russian influence interferes with the Western intention to stabilize region and different regional national interests creating an instability.

Because of its position, Croatia is sensitive to any instability in the region and has to act in order to protect its own primary interest - stability. From that fact, the thesis derives a primary research question: 'How should Croatia use its instruments of national power to mitigate Russian influence?' Secondary research questions support the primary one by examination of ways Russia imposes its interest in the region, and reasons why some regional countries are more susceptible to Russian interest.

Russian activities in the region have increased in numbers and complexity from the time President Putin took a power. From the beginning, Russian influence was based on the economy, especially energy, seeking to increase the region's dependence on Russian gas and oil. Now, Russia uses all instruments of national power to impose its influence and achieve its goals. These goals are not limited only on energy infrastructure building that will connect Russia with Western Europe, but encompasses the region as part of a Russian interest zone.

The examination of reasons why some regional countries are more susceptible to Russian interests brought some unexpected findings. They are not susceptible to Russian interest because they have unresolved issues among themselves, but because there is a gap between them and the West (NATO/EU). Russia uses that gap to impose its influence. In that sense, the issue, or the subject of dispute has no importance for Russian influence. The fact that the West puts itself in adversarial position towards some countries in dispute (or opposite) is a main cause for import of Russian influence in the region. This approach is applicable throughout the world. Each time the West choses a side, Russia will almost automatically support other side in a dispute expanding its influence in the world. Consequently, it is especially important for the definition of a strategy that would decrease Russian influence.

The focus of a strategy for mitigation of Russian influence should be moved from the subject of dispute to the establishment of relations of cooperation with both sides. Resolution of a dispute does not mean necessary mitigation of Russian influence, especially if one side is not satisfied with result. On the other hand, establishment of cooperation with both sides would mitigate Russian influence regardless the solution of problem. In that sense, the West can exploit its main advantage it has over Russia—it's much bigger economy. The thesis assumes that each subject would rather cooperate with the West than with Russia because it will benefit more from that relationship, especially economically. In that sense, the thesis finds that cooperation between regional countries and Russia is more orientated on making them dependable on Russian energy than on true cooperation from where both side will benefit.

From the perspective of mitigation of Russian influence in the region, the thesis finds the western policy towards the region as wrong. The West should not put itself in position of arbiter. The present policy of conditionality is seen as in favor of one side. As a consequence, Russian influence in the region will expand.

Recommendations

Recommendation for action

The Croatian operational approach should take into account aforementioned consideration. It should be based on cooperation rather than conditionality. Croatia has advantages that could make it an EU pivot in the region and the bridge through which western influence will flow into the region. However, strategy would require a certain risk because it does not depend only on one side. It takes two side for cooperation. Strategy of cooperation would work only if both sides find common interests. In that sense, objects in LOEs should be carefully defined in order to ensure needed common interest.

Recommendations for future research

Future research could continue in two directions. One would examine ways of importing Russian influence in other regions of the world. The Syrian example is very actual and could prove or deny these thesis findings. The other research could be oriented towards the region and examine other subjects that make the situation so complex. For example, Turkey is developing very fast and expands its influence through Muslim communities in the region. Another actual topic is the refugee crisis and radical Islam.

Conclusion

The shift in Russian strategy toward the region from an energy driven policy to the intention of expanding the Russian zone of influence in the region is clearly seen from the intensity and complexity of Russia actions. Those actions were made possible due to Western policy toward the region. Lack of cooperation between the West and regional countries, namely Serbia, caused by different positions on regional issues (Kosovo, status of RS) created a gap between Serbia on one side and the West on the other. Russia filled that gap and established a strong relationship with Serbia. In addition to Russia imposing its influence, another significant consequence of this situation was created. Regional issues became much harder to dissolve because both sides enjoyed support of great powers. That makes them more persistent in their claims. Cooperation should be the key of Western strategy. Western cooperation with both sides that are at odds would have two consequences. Russia would not be able to impose its influence on a great scale and the possibility for dissolution of regional issues based on compromise would increase.

Based on everything aforementioned, the author finds that the hypothesis from the beginning of the research is not totally correct. Regional issues have an influence on the susceptibility of some countries towards Russian influence, but it is not decisive. After the research conducted, this thesis finds a new hypothesis: Russia uses gaps between regional countries and the West to impose its interest. More important, this implies that the West can adopt policy that reduces these gaps.

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